

THE LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

No. 1088.—VOL. XLII.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING MARCH 8 1894.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[“YOU WILL NEVER DANCE WITH OR SPEAK TO HIM AGAIN,” HUGH CONCLUDED, IMPERIOUSLY.]

LADY RAVENHILL'S SECRET.

CHAPTER XXIX.

BUT this style of reception, we need scarcely remark, was not what Mr. Digby had bargained for, nor meant to put up with for a single moment. To be thus flouted, after his vaunts to Lord Firstflight, was beyond endurance; this haughty young lady must be brought to her knees. He advanced towards her with a hard-set smile on his cast-iron face, and a fierce menace in his eye, and said in his most dulcet tones,—

“Has Lady Ravenhill already forgotten Mr. Digby? He was fortunate enough to have the pleasure of an introduction quite recently.”

And Lady Ravenhill, overawed by his manner, cowed by his eyes, and dreading with sudden sharpness the consequence of her foolish coolness to a man who held so much at his mercy, relaxed into a bow, and said with assumed politeness,—

“Ah!—yes, of course. I know Mr. Digby.

Mr. Digby”—significantly—“is not so easily forgotten!”

“Have a care what you are doing, madam!” he said, in a low voice. “Keep your sneers for somebody else!” he muttered savagely, still appearing to lookers-on to be uttering some commonplace society speech. “You are in my power, and I shall make you feel it! The idea of your daring to pretend not to know me, and attempt to cut me—I who actually have the rope in my pocket to put round that felon’s neck!”—looking over towards her husband, who, in happy ignorance of their pleasant remarks, was leaning against a neighbouring doorway, and conversing with two magnates of the hunt with unusual animation. “I am going to present a friend of mine—Lord Firstflight. I have promised him that he shall waltz with you twice this evening.”

“Promised him!” she echoed, her face aflame.

“Yes, my lady; and it will be worse for you if you not redeem my promise!” he returned in a threatening tone, but bowing low as he spoke, so that bystanders, who wondered at the

long and confidential *tête-à-tête* between the baroness and the barrister, were under the impression that he was paying her some graceful and delicate compliment.

With a gesture as though he were summoning Lord Firstflight to the foot of a throne, Mr. Digby beckoned him forward, and presented him to the belle of the ballroom, who was pale now to the very lips.

Her would-be partner was a tall, good-looking, young man, with a low voice, a long moustache, and a languid manner. The fame of his evil doings had not come as yet to her ears, and she perceiving him to be outwardly a gentleman, agreed to give him the two dances for which he humbly begged, little knowing what pressure had been put upon his fair partner, nor how in her very soul she revolted against the chains in which his friend, Mr. Digby, held her.

Mr. Digby saw her writing down Lord Firstflight’s name on her programme with a scarcely smothered chuckle of satisfaction; for a young and pretty matron to be seen dancing with this Lothario meant in the eyes of the Hampshire world much—much that was not

to the credit of her reputation, or, indeed, good name!

This Lothario danced divinely (as Lotharios mostly do), and soon he and his new acquaintance were swimming round the room together, to the inexpressible amazement, bewilderment, and indignation of Lady Ravenhill's husband. To see his wife encircled by the arm of this too notorious blacksheep filled him with absolute fury as he stood in a doorway following them with his eyes, vowing vengeance in his heart, and gnawing the ends of his moustache unmercifully.

Who had dared to introduce that young scoundrel to Eleanor? he asked himself angrily; and how dared she stand in full view of the whole room, smiling and fanning herself, and looking as if she were enjoying herself immensely, and a totally different creature to the automaton he had had under his roof for the last two months?

Was it possible that they were old friends?—that they had met before when she was the mysterious but bewitching Mrs. Hill?—was it possible? But all kinds of possibilities occur quite naturally to an angry and jealous husband.

He would have made his way to them when the dance was over, but the crowd was such that he could not reach them before they had gone down one of the dimly-lit corridors and passed out of sight, along with dozens of other couples who were streaming off in the direction of the conservatory.

He had not the hardihood to follow them even had he had the chance, for just at this moment a fan was laid on his arm, and a well-known, but not too welcome voice said in a sprightly tone,—

"My dear Hugh, run you to earth, as they say down here in sporting phraseology," and there before him stood the ubiquitous Blanche Derwent, in a low crimson garment, out of which her fine shoulders were liberally displayed, and with a red bouquet the size of a tea-tray in her hand.

"And where did you drop from, Blanche?" he asked, when he had recovered from his first surprise.

"I dropped from the Bruce's brougham. I am staying with them. Come down for a little hunting, just the fog and of the season, for change of air, and," lowering her voice, "to see you!"

"To see me! Very kind of you, I'm sure! But why are you specially anxious about seeing me now?"

"I want to take in your new life. Walk with me down here, and have a little quiet talk away from this horrid place and the braying of the band."

And Lord Ravenhill had no other alternative than to turn and wend his steps towards the dim, tropical retirement of the huge conservatory.

In one of the embowered seats sat Lady Ravenhill, talking society platitudes to her companion in a rather abstracted manner; but she gave a start, not lost on a man of the world like Freddy Firstlight, as she saw her husband and Blanche Derwent pass slowly down a centre flagged walk in deep and confidential conversation. Blanche, her evil genius, here again!

The couple had some difficulty in finding seats, and, as they moved about, they came upon Lady Ravenhill and her cavalier. She was talking away now in her most animated manner, resolved to show her husband that if he chose to flirt with Blanche, she could produce a Roland for his Oliver—a Roland that made her life's partner look excessively black as he came upon him sitting beside his wife beneath the orange trees; but beyond a black look he took no notice of the pair; but passed on in Blanche's train, carrying her bouquet.

Eleanor glanced at her companion, and read great things in his eyes—eyes that said more than the tongue dared to utter. They said, "Your husband is carrying on his old game with Mrs. Derwent, and neglecting you, flirting

with her before your face. I pity you! He has no taste! You are immeasurably more beautiful. I admire you!"

This his eyes—his tongue merely said,— "Ravenhill and I used to be chums once upon a time, when he was a bachelor, but now he won't look at the same side of the street with me. He is quite a reformed character; but he was as bad as any of us once. There's nothing like matrimony for steadyng a fellow, is there, Lady Ravenhill?"

"I really am no judge," she replied evasively, picking off, as she spoke, the leaf of a neighbouring plant, and dissecting it with an air of interest.

"So many of my friends have become Benedicts that I think I'll follow their example. They all seem very happy, and well-pleased with their lot. If I had any chance of drawing a prize I'd take the plunge to-morrow. 'Pon my honour I would!"

"Really!" she answered with a wawn.

"I mean to marry for love, when I do," he continued, not in the least abashed by her indifference and air of ennui. He plucked himself on fascinating every woman to whom he took a fancy; it was all a mere question of time and opportunity. "Of course yours was a love-match?" he added impressively. "No doubt Ravenhill was head over ears in love?"

"No," she replied, taken quite off her guard, "no, ours was not a love-match."

"Not! You surprise me immensely! Then may I infer—lowering his voice to a tender whisper—"that your heart is in your own keeping still?"

The only answer vouchsafed to this impudent question was a cool, haughty stare of blank, unflinching amazement, and he saw at once, as he said to himself, that he must draw in his horns and tread more warily.

"I beg your pardon, Lady Ravenhill. Of course I was only joking," he exclaimed, with an awkward laugh.

"There, I see another dance is beginning," she retorted, rising, "and we must be going back without delay."

"You won't forget No. 15?" he said in an imploring voice, as she parted with him to take the arm of her next partner, and as it was in the bond—that hideous, binding, unwritten bond—she gave a little nod of acquiescence before she moved away.

She danced in the same set of leaders with her husband and Blanche, but never glanced once in their direction, and ignored their neighbourhood as if they were not within miles. With all her airs of indifference, and her composed and dignified exterior, her heart was literally aching with jealousy and indignation.

Here was she, striving with every nerve, with every effort to shield that man from the consequences of his crime, allowing herself to be humbled and insulted for his sake, whilst he stood there, evidently without a cloud on his mind, listening attentively to the low notes of his former sweetheart, giving back look for look into her bold, black eyes, and flaunting his preference in her face.

At times she felt inclined to leave him to his fate. But, Eleanor, your judgment was hasty. If you had not kept your face so proudly averted, nor allowed your imagination such licence, you would have seen that he sent far more glances in your direction than into his partner's face—that the attention he gave to her eager, unkind utterances was but mechanical and half-hearted—that his thoughts were not with her, but with you!

Blanche was saying,—

"And why won't you be, then, frank with her, Hugh? Tell me, as if I were your sister, how you and she get on, and if you really hit it off or not. I never can get it out of my head that she is Mrs. Hill. I cannot realise that she is your wife—it has been such a queer, in-and-out kind of business all along."

"Oh, yes! we get on all right," returned Hugh, with his eyes on the floor. "Blanche may be forgiven for such an outrageous falsehood!"

"You don't seem to be a very demonstrative couple," she remarked, slyly, giving him a mischievous look.

"Oh, dear, no! Demonstration, as you call it, in public is a wretched form."

"Still she might look at you—just once in a way," mockingly.

"Oh, she sees quite enough of me at home," he replied, with an effort at sprightliness that fell short of the mark.

"She is looking very ill," remarked Mrs. Derwent, after a long exhaustive stare.

"Really! I don't see it," returned her partner, glancing in the same direction.

"No! People in the house with one never do see these things; it's the lookers-on who see most of the game!" she added, in a tone of the deepest significance. "She looks worn, and thin, and harassed. You need not make a mystery to me—I see it all. Your married life is as it deserved to be—a farce and a failure!"

"Thank you, Blanche!" he replied, stiffly.

"Yes, look as angry as you like! I will speak the truth to you for once. What could you expect from the very first, from marrying a blind wife merely for her money? The wife disappears at the church door, and turns up years after with perfect vision, and a very sharp pair of eyes, and is the prettiest little adventuress Mrs. Hill, who develops, after some curious scenes, into Lady Ravenhill, your devoted wife!"

"You may call me what you please, Blanche," said Hugh, in a voice which trembled with passion; "but you will please to withdraw the term adventuress as applied to my wife. That she was blind was the visitation of the Almighty, that she recovered her sight we have every reason to be deeply grateful for. That she lived under another name was my fault, not hers, and it is remedied now. She was never an adventuress!"

"Well, I retract this word to please you; but all the same, Lady Ravenhill is further from you than the bewitching Mrs. Hill. She has something against you—either that, or she loves another man!"

"Blanche!"

"Yes, Blanche speaks with the privilege of an old friend, and she does not like to see the ever light-hearted Ravenhill develop into a moody, grave-looking man, with a short temper, because he is married to a marble statue. On your word, now, Hugh, tell the truth! Did you ever kiss her?"

"It is no concern of yours, Mrs. Derwent. Supposing, for a change, I put a few questions to you—to tell you the truth, since you are so bent on the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. If you are to be friends with me you, must leave my wife alone!"

"Must! that's not a pretty word!"

"No; but it is plain, vigorous English, and embodies my meaning. And now, Countess, be sensible; get all these odd ideas about us out of your head, and come along to supper!" offering her his arm.

After supper Hugh encountered his wife on the stairs, and beckoning her aside into a wide corridor, said,—

"I want to speak to you, Eleanor; just come here for one moment."

"Please don't detain me," she said in a chilly voice, "my partner is waiting," pointing towards the end of the gallery, where Lord Firstlight stood aloof with an air of languid expectancy.

"How long have you known that fellow?" demanded her husband, roughly.

"Not long," was her evasive reply. "Is it to ask me such a preposterous question that you have kept me here?"

"To know him at all means social extinction for a woman," he returned, angrily. "He is not fit to be in the room with decent people. You will never dance with him, will you speak to him again?" he concluded, impatiently.

"Won't I?" she replied, with an irritating

smile. "How dreadful! And just for mere idle curiosity I would like to know why not?"

"Because I forbid you!"

"You forbid me!" she cried, sarcastically. "And what right have you to forbid me anything?"

"The mere fact of being your husband!"

"That is not a fact, it is a fiction. You are nothing to me in reality, but my cousin Hugh. Our marriage was just like a marriage on the stage—it meant nothing—nothing! Nothing but money, at least!" correcting herself.

Her husband at these taunts had become white with passion, and surveying her with angry eyes, said—

"Well, then, admitting that we are not husband and wife, I am your cousin, your nearest relation in the world; the head of your house; and, as such, I forbid you again to have any intercourse with Lord Firstflight. It is not fit that you should know him. I am not asking you to do this for my sake, but for your own."

"My own sake! Then, for my own sake, I like a good partner, and as they are rather rare down here I shall certainly dance with your bete noire, in spite of your awful warning."

"In spite of all I have said!"

"In spite of all you have said!"

"Dance with me instead?" he pleaded, eagerly. "You used to think me a tolerable partner not so very long ago. Say you were engaged to me, say anything—do not create a scandal by walking again with him. Why it is not six weeks since he— But take my word for it," pulling himself up—"he is a bad man; and when I say that—I, who am not very strict-laced—you may believe that he is worthless indeed."

"Bad he may be," returned Eleanor, boldly, "but he must be white compared to another whom you and I know, and, at any rate, I prefer dancing with him to you. You may go and dance with Mrs. Derwent!" turning away.

"Stop, Eleanor!" he said, sternly, interrupting her departure. "I have borne with much from you, but I swear to you now that my cup is full. It is the last straw that breaks the camel's back. You have accused me of murder; and then, though appearances were against me, if you had cared for me you would have cast the suspicion from you. You have repudiated me as your husband, and now, in contemptuous defiance of my wishes—my prayers, almost—you are about to fling your good name abroad to be the sport of the crowd. Your name is mine, and if you do this thing you will make a breach between us nothing can ever heal. Think twice before you act. I am a patient, long-suffering man—even you must admit that. I have loved you truly, Eleanor, though you may not think it—yes, and no one else; but I am absolutely at the end of my tether, and if you go against me now, good-bye!" he said, turning full face to his wife, and looking at her straight between the eyes.

What leap whispered into Lady Ravenhill's ear, as she stood confronting her husband in the now empty, crimson-carpeted corridor, "Take your own way; don't yield an inch!"

She was half-tempted to give in, as she looked at him standing between her and her lingering partner. He was so handsome, so much in earnest, so manly in his bearing! But the imp carried the day; for, with a sudden revulsion of feeling and a lively memory of Mrs. Derwent, she turned, nodded to him, and said, with a smile, "Then good-bye!" and with a wave of her fan hurried down the lobby and joined the impatient "Firstflight," who led her down to the ballroom, and in two minutes more was gyrating round with her in his arms.

Hugh lingered for a moment after his wife's departure. He felt as if some one had struck him a heavy blow; and that he was still reeling from its effects. After a while he went below, and stood with a mob of other men in a doorway. Already he saw, or fancied he saw, many eyes upon that revelling couple that danced in such time and with such grace and many nods about their partnership.

Clipping good dancer, "Firstflight," said a

strange voice close to him; "and a rattling pretty girl he has got hold of this time. Who is she? She is new."

"That's Lady Ravenhill!" said another visitor. "He seems very sweet on her. Been mooning round after her the whole night."

"Oh—hem! Ravenhill had better look out!"

"Pooh! he and his wife are at daggers drawn, they say, and hate one another like poison. He is here to-night somewhere. Dark, looking customer, that looks as if he had the devil's own temper."

The dark-looking customer had heard enough—quite sufficient for one evening—and he hastily withdrew, not only from this particular doorway, but from the ballroom altogether, in disgust.

When Lady Ravenhill was brought down to her carriage an hour later by a small crowd of flattering partners, who pressed round her as she passed to the entrance-hall, one bearing a bouquet, another her fan, it was a kind of triumphal progress on a small scale—a progress brought to a full stop by the young lady's husband, who advanced from some mysterious place quite suddenly, and offering her his arm with an air of the gravest politeness, conducted her himself down to her brougham, and placed her in it.

As she drew up the furs inside with a yawn she turned her face towards him, expecting him to take his place beside her; but no, he had already closed the door, and was giving the welcome signal, "Home," to the sleepy-eyed servants.

"Could it be possible that he was not coming?" she said to herself, as she leaned forward with a sudden stare. "Quite possible."

He made her a slight gesture of farewell as he stood on the steps under the portico, whilst she drove away alone into the black February night.

"Then he had meant what he said," she whispered to herself, as she threw herself once more back in the carriage. "He was a man of his word. It had been good-bye, indeed!"

CHAPTER XXX.

"It really was 'Good-bye,'" Lady Ravenhill again repeated to herself, as she found that her husband had left her entirely mistress of the position, and quite alone.

His valet was gone, his hunters' and hacks' stalls stood empty, and she could go up and down the house as often as she pleased; there was no chance of encountering him on the stairs. Little as she had seen of him she missed him. The great house felt immensely empty. She missed a vague, far-away perfume of cigars, a constant sound of whistling—yes, he actually could whistle—a quick, light step on the stairs and along the passages, a restless banging of doors, and now and then a man's authoritative voice. She found the weight of government had come upon her shoulders, and that she had had a previous delightful immunity from many little bothers and worries—what horses were to be used, what not, which carriage—what was to be done about the poaching in the lower woods. The master of the hounds had sent word that he was going to draw the gorse on the Friar's Hill—what earths were to be stopped? Drummmond, the gardener, had been seen selling the hothouse fruit in large quantities—who was to speak to him? One of the grooms said he would not stay any longer under the coachman, and the coachman wouldn't stay with him, and which of them was to go?

These were the kind of questions that were cropping up every day, and she did not at all relish the position of viceroy.

Where the master was no one seemed to know, and she was far too proud to ask; but there seemed a kind of vague idea that he was finishing the season in Leicestershire, and following his favourite sport.

March came, bleak and black, with bitter searching winds, and still Eleanor was alone. She would have asked Mary Fortescue to

come and keep her company but the Fortescues were all abroad. She had no intimate friends in the neighbourhood, and since Lord Firstflight's dog-cart had been seen bowling up the avenue few lady callers came her way.

Lord Firstflight only gained admission once, but how were people to know that? His red-wheeled dog-cart had been seen going through her gates at least six times, and public report magnified those six times by ten. Mr. Digby had also been a visitor. He had not failed to call and remind Lady Ravenhill that time was up; and Lady Ravenhill felt like a desperate woman. She had been to London and visited Mr. Issachar, and he had taken her measure in the keen glance as she stood before him in his inner sanctum; and timidly proffered her request—the immediate loan of ten thousand pounds, to be lent under the strictest secrecy, and to be paid off by instalments, if he wished, at three thousand pounds a year punctually, but she wanted the money at once—this she impressed on him with nervous emphasis at least three separate times.

No need. Did not all his customers bring the same story? Would aught but pressing necessity lead them into his den to be shorn?

"But, my dear madam," he said, rubbing his hands together, and noticing her handsome sables and patrician face, and saying to himself, "Some lady of title in a deuce of a scrape, which she wants to keep from her husband, and this ten thousand is hush money. I see it all as plain as a pikestaff."

"My dear madam, I should be delighted to oblige you; but what is your security?"

"The three thousand a year—my fortune," she returned, eagerly.

"Yes, yes, yes," impatiently, "but that is nothing. How do I know—life, to be plain, is uncertain—that you may not die within three months, and then, what becomes of my poor ten thousand pounds? Who will repay me? Certainly not your fortune, for that goes, I conclude, to your heirs!"

This was a phase of the business that had not struck Eleanor before, and she felt at a complete standstill, and looked it.

"Then what can I do—what would you wish me to do?" she said, plaintively.

"You must insure your life, or get some one, some rich substantial person, to go surety for you for the money."

"Oh! I cannot do that," she interrupted, quickly.

"Then I'm afraid I cannot assist you," he said, with an air of the deepest sympathy. "You see, business is business, and I am only acting for another person. Were I myself the principal (which he was) we might come to terms without any difficulty—no doubt of that."

"I could insure my life, I suppose!" she said, doubtfully.

"Yes, but that would entail a certain amount of publicity, you know, and your name would have to come out. Indeed, in any case, I would require an interview with your solicitor."

"That is not to be thought of but as a last resource," she cried, impatiently.

"Then you seem to have other resources, madam!" said the money-lender, quickly.

"May I ask what they are?"

"My diamonds!" she faltered, in a low voice.

"Family?" he asked, briefly.

"Yes, and valued at twenty-five thousand pounds."

"Which means a third," he said, with a knowing smile.

"Not in this case, that is their lowest valuation; probably if sold they would fetch more."

"Only they are not yours to sell—they belong to your children."

"About three thousand, or may be five, are my own private and exclusive property. Those I shall sell, but if you like I will leave the parure, necklace, and stomacher, algerettes, and bracelets belonging to the property in pawn with you. If I die, my husband shall redeem them."

"But I infer that he knows nothing of this transaction now pending between us!"

"No, nothing! But I shall make a will, and tell him where to find the family diamonds, and if you will be content with them as a pledge, and to receive the bulk of the money yearly from me, not through my solicitors, I will bring the jewels up to town next week, and you can see for yourself that I have not over-rated them. They are worth even more than I have stated."

"I must charge interest as well, you know," he replied, confidentially; "heavy interest, as this is such a curious out-of-the-way transaction. *Secrets* always cost dear, and ten thousand is a large sum, so we will have to say thirty-five per cent. If you will come up again next week, or week following, we will have a look at the diamonds and decide the bargain."

"Very well," said his client, rising, and feeling that she was not at all a bad woman of business. "And you will have the money ready for me when I come, won't you?"

"Yes, I'll see about it. But before we do anything serious, you will have to tell me your name—under the strictest secrecy, of course!"

"Must I?" she asked, doubtfully.

"Certainly you must!" he replied, emphatically.

"Then my name is Lady Ravenhill, of Brookford, Blankshire."

"Lady Ravenhill! Not the wife of that wild young fellow that used to be in the Guards about five or six years ago?"

"My husband was in the Guards," she replied, stiffly.

"Ay! He made the money fly!" admiringly. "Thought no more of fifty per cent. than if it was fivepence; but I suppose he has sown his wild oats long ago. 'Lord!'—laughing—"to think that his wife would be coming to me too. Well, well, well, the world's a funny place!" and seeing that his humour did not correspond with his lady customer's countenance, he abruptly changed the subject, conducted her to the outer door with all due deference, called a hansom, mentally noted her pretty feet, and saw her off the premises with half-a-dozen bows.

As he turned back into his own special den, he rubbed his hands with unction, and wished with all his strength (we won't say heart) that good luck would send him such a customer a little oftener. "Something to be made out of a client like that! She was as free with the coin as her husband had been, and terribly in earnest, which was more than could be said for him."

This goose who was to lay such golden eggs went home with a comparatively lighter heart now. She need not tremble at every ring of the bell, fearing the entrance of the dreaded Mr. Digby to have his account settled. She had done a good day's work, and her very best; but she brought back with her the commencement of a very bad cold, which she caught standing about in a draughty station for half-an-hour, and then getting into a hot, closely-packed first-class carriage, then out again into an open Victoria sent to meet her by some blundering mistake.

This cold settled upon her chest, and kept her in bed for three weeks; and she often asked herself, as she lay there, listlessly staring at the wall-paper, and listening to the tiresome ticking of the clock, would it not be a merciful release to her if she could die!

How wretched her life was! How blank everything around her looked! Nothing to cling to in the shape of hope—nothing to look forward to! Who would miss her? The Fortescues and a few Sabbath friends might perhaps be sorry, and that would be all. As to Hugh, her death would be a blessed release to him. She alone knew his secret, and dead women are safer than living ones, and he would be free to marry Conny Derwent!

How many events had crowded themselves into this one year, this one winter!—her discovery by her husband, the murder, the life of agony she had lived ever since, loving yet loathing the man whose name she bore; Mr.

Digby's disclosure, his odious bargain, his rapacity, audacity, and insolence, his fury at her illness, and his enforced waiting; her quarrel with Hugh at the ball, his entreaties and his reproaches, rang in her ears still! Could it be true what he said about loving her always? What he had told her about Lord Firstflight, was but a faint outline of a career which an officious lady acquaintance had filled in with a brush steeped in the blackest of dyes?

He had been married, divorced, had eloped half-a-dozen times, was more than suspected of evil doings on the turf, of cheating at cards, &c., &c.

He had called incessantly with cards of inquiry, game, flowers, fruit; nothing in the shape of a rebuff could shake him off where once his fancy fastened, and Eleanor had reason to deplore the day she made his acquaintance. On that point, at least, Hugh was right, and she was wrong. He, Lord Firstflight, had rallied her about her long *idie-d-die* with her husband. "He looked as if he was showing you up about something, if I might hazard such an idea! He looked as if something had put him out!"

"And so it had," she answered, rashly; "he was blowing me up, as you call it."

"You don't seem to have taken it to heart then," her companion observed, with a smile of approbation.

"Oh, dear, no!" with well-assumed gaiety. Eleanor often reproached herself for this speech, but reproaches were of no use. Nothing could recall the words; she only hoped that Lord Firstflight would forget them. Vain hope! Things he ought to have remembered he always almost invariably forgot; but things that would be as well consigned to the limbo of his mind, his mind clung to most tenaciously.

In the early days of April Lady Ravenhill was convalescent, and downstairs in the little drawing-room, seated before the fire, with a shawl over her shoulders, one wet afternoon. It was her first appearance below, and she felt inexpressibly dreary and miserable, with not a soul to speak to, not a voice to say, "I'm glad to see you down again," not even a new book to read. Was ever anyone in the world as much alone as she was?

Neither father, mother, brother, or sister, aunt, or uncle, and but one cousin. She wished she had been born a poor girl, one of a large, cheerful, busy family. Oh! how she envied those who had a happy, lively, bright home! How gladly would she change, and give up money, carriages, maid, horses—everything, just for a little human affection. What good to her was this big, dreary, empty house, with no one to speak to from day's end to day's end? It was more like solitary confinement than anything else!

As she sat before the fire turning over these thoughts in her mind, with two large tears rolling down her pale cheeks, she was startled by a footstep on the soft carpet between her and the door; and, looking hastily round, she beheld Mrs. Derwent advancing upon her in all the magnificence of brown velvet and furs.

"Don't rise!" she said, stretching out a well-gloved hand. "I told them not to announce me! I thought I would give you a pleasant surprise!" seating herself, and unfastening her coat, quite at her ease. "So you've been laid up with a bad cold, I hear, and, poor soul, you do look wretched—miserable!"

"Oh! I'm much better!" said Eleanor, with an attempt at cheerfulness, "and I hope I'll soon be all right!"

"You don't look very happy!" said the other, abruptly. "You have something on your mind!"

"I!" colouring faintly. "Why should you say so? What an odd idea to occur to you!"

"Is it?—And, *oddly enough*, I think I know what is preying on you, like the worm in the bud! You believe!" leaning forward, and speaking in a whisper, after glancing cautiously round the room, "You believe that Hugh committed that murder! Now, you need not

speak, your white face speaks for you! No wonder, under such circumstances, you did not hit it off! If you cared for him as much as I do for a dog, you would not have credited him with such a deed! I believe him as innocent as I am!" she continued, proudly; "but there, I am different to you. I know him, and I love him, and you do neither the one nor the other!" audaciously. "Stop!" putting up her hand. "Let me say what I came to tell you. Only for you and your money Hugh would have married me, so I hated you, and if I could have done it without detection I would have killed you with no more compunction than I would kill a wasp but I won't! So never tremble and shrink away, your poor, miserable creature! Now I pity you. The fates have woven a curious life for you. They gave you back your sight and your husband—a husband foolishly in love with you—but you soon damped his transports; and, if all I hear be true, completely extinguished his affection. He has left you for ever. Is it not the case?"

"It is!" returned Eleanor, with extraordinary composure.

"Then I am avenged!" said the other, triumphantly. "He thought to clear himself in your eyes, to lead a life of bliss to which Arcadia itself would be a mere joke, and in two months it is all over—for ever! It is clear you have offended him now past forgiveness, and will never see him again—*never!* I know him. He is forbearing for a long time, but once you pass the rubicon, good-bye!" nodding her head, emphatically. "You two have lived a life apart ever since you came here!" here she paused, and looked at her companion, inquiringly.

"How do you know? What grounds have you for saying this?" said the other, with averted eyes.

"I know *everything*. I have ways and means. I know, if you wish for full details, from the servants. Hugh's valet was in my pay!"

"I wonder you have the face to sit there and say so!" exclaimed Eleanor, indignantly confronting her.

"Who is to know?" said the other, lightly.

"If you repeat what I tell you, I shall *deny* every word of it. I warn you—I am speaking to you now as woman to woman, and what I say is for your ear alone, and I have no scruples!"

"My ear is very much obliged to you!" sarcastically. "You have told it that at the time you would have murdered me without compunction, that you love my husband, that you have a paid spy under our roof. Is there anything else?" ironically.

"No, not much. I am going abroad for a long time, and I felt a burning desire to come and look at you, and see if you were as wretched as they said."

"You mean the servants?" contemptuously.

"Never mind who I mean! And you are. What a life poor Hugh must have had! A moping, silent companion, whom he only saw at dinner, who never spoke, and must have nobly represented the traditional Death's head at the feast! A woman, who in her own mind, had branded him as murderer! Poor fellow! No wonder he was glad to wrench himself free from such fascinating society!" with a withering sneer. "I think, in the matter of patience, he outvalued the prophet Job! Another man would have thrust you penniless outside his door within two days, and he has endured you for months, dowered you nobly, and left you in possession of a princely establishment—the more fool he! Well, *au revoir!*" rising, and leisurely fastening her furs. "I won't say good-bye, for I know we shall meet again!" So saying she nodded in a patronizing manner to her stupefied hostess, and sailed forth out of the room as silently as she had entered it. In a moment more the crunching of wheels upon gravel testified to her departure, and Eleanor felt as if she had but just awakened from some bad dream; and completely broken down between mental suffering and physical weakness,

leant her face upon her hands, and burst into a passion of tears.

Whilst Mrs. Derwent, who had borrowed the Bruce's brougham, especially to drive over and pay a farewell visit to her dear friend, Lady Ravenhill, leant back in that very comfortable conveyance, with a smile of dreamy satisfaction on her hard, handsome face, and with a warm conviction in her own mind that she had done a good morning's work—had enjoyed her excursion immensely—and that there was not the shadow of a doubt but that the Ravenhills had parted for ever.

(To be continued.)

TIGHT-ROPE dancing dates back to very early times. Terence has a reference to it. Froissart records this feat at the entry of Isabel of Bavaria, queen to Charles VI. of France, into Paris—"There was a mayster came out of Geane; he had tied a corde upon the highest house on the brydge of Saynt Michell over all the houses, and the other ende was tyed to the highest tower of Our Ladye's Church; and, as the quenne passed by, and was in the great strete called Our Ladye's strete, by cause it was late, this sayd mayster, wyth two brinnynge (burning) candelles in hys handes, issued out of a little stage that he had made on the heighth of Our Ladye's tower, swynginge as he went upon the corde all along the great strete, so that all that saw him hadde marvayle how it might be; and he bore styll in his handes the two brinnynge candelles, so that he might well be sene all over Parys and two myles without the city. He was such a tomler that his lightness was greatly praised." A similar feat was performed before Edward VI., when he passed in procession through the city of London, in February, 1546, previous to his coronation.

EGG DANCE IN INDIA.—The Indian egg dance is not, as one might expect from the name given it, a dance upon these fragile objects. It is executed in this wise: The dancer, dressed in a corsage and very short skirt, carries a willow wheel of moderate diameter fastened horizontally upon her head. Around this wheel threads are fastened, equally distant from each other, and at the end of each of these threads is a slip-noose, which is kept open by a glass bead. Thus equipped, the young girl comes toward the spectators with a basket full of eggs, which she passes around for inspection, to prove that they are real, not imitations. The music strikes up a jerky, monotonous strain, and the dancer begins to whirl around with great rapidity. Then, seizing an egg, she puts it in one of the slip-nooses, and with a quick motion throws it from her in such a way as to draw the knot tight. The swift turning of the dancer produces a centrifugal force which stretches the thread out straight like a ray shooting from the circumference of the circle. One after another the eggs are thrown out in these slip-nooses until they make a horizontal aureole or halo above the dancer's head. Then the dance becomes more rapid—so rapid, in fact, that it is difficult to distinguish the features of the girl. The moment is critical; the least false step, the least irregularity in time, and the eggs dash against each other. But how can this dance be stopped? There is but one way—remove the eggs in the same way in which they have been put in place. This operation is by far the most delicate of the two. It is necessary that the dancer, by a single motion, should take hold of the egg and remove it from the noose. A single false motion of the hand, the least interference with one of the threads, and the general arrangement is suddenly broken, and the whole performance disastrously ended. At last all the eggs are successfully removed, and the dancer stops, and without seeming in the least dizzied by the dance of twenty-five or thirty-five minutes, advances with a firm step to the spectators and presents them with the eggs, which are immediately broken in a flat dish to prove that there is no trick in the performance.

GOLDEN GRAIN.

CHAPTER XIX.

"THE STately HOMES OF ENGLAND."

STately indeed! And Priory Park was one of the stateliest of them. In the very prettiest part of Surrey, within convenient distance of town, and yet as far in the country and as complete in its own seclusion as if the busy metropolis had been a hundred miles away. It was the very perfection of a beautiful English home, and I think the poetess must have had just such a one in her mind when she wrote her ever-quoted poem.

It was very old—so old, indeed, that part of it, a ruin now, dated back to the times when King Alfred ruled in England, and tried to civilise his rough people and to teach them something besides the way to cut the throats of their enemies. The story of the old keep was something apocryphal I believe, but it was nice to believe in it, and the St. Colomb's did that to their heart's content. The newest of the house was of the time of the Stuarts, and the older portion which was habitable dated from Queen Elizabeth. There had been a Meredyth of repute in her day, who had served her so well that she had rewarded him by making him Earl St. Colomb, with a large grant of land to add to his estates.

That the lad was taken by force from a monastery, and that the house itself was annexed, and the monks turned out to do as they could, was of little consequence. The Catholics had fallen on evil times in the days of the virgin queen; and the Meredyths came and settled, and made their home where the holy men had sung hymns and done charitable deeds, and ruled the land all round them like feudal barons or kings in little. The place had never lost its name. It was the Priory still; and there was something peaceful and religious-looking about the grey stone walls, and the mullioned windows and the ivy that had thickened with the growth of ages, till it looked like a part of the wall itself.

Even Cromwell, who did so much to destroy the characteristics of all the old family places he came across, and who thought even churches none too good to stable his troopers' horses in, had not been able to efface the old world grandeur of Priory Park. The owner of it in his day had had to fly for his life, because he would not fight against his king, nor give his allegiance to the iron-handed Puritan who carried religion at the point of the sword, and killed and ravaged with a prayer on his lips, and death in his hand.

It seemed then as if a Meredyth would never reign in the old house again, but better times came for the adherents of the luckless Stuarts. The king had his own again, and a reaction set in as violent as the previous tempest had been. Charles the Second flung bounties and rewards broadcast to all who had helped him in his need, and Hugh Meredyth of Priory Park had been one of the most efficient. An exile himself, he had aided his exiled master, and when Charles rode once more through the streets of London with the people who had murdered his father shouting for joy at his return, his old friend and comrade was close beside him. If he was an ingrate to others he was not to Hugh Meredyth, and took a royal interest in the redecoration and purifying of the Priory after its desecration by the Cromwellian troops.

There were spiteful people who said that it was because the daughter of the house was remarkably pretty and winning that His Majesty took all the trouble, but there was never anything beyond talk. Mistress Elfrida Meredyth was a most discreet young person, and married a baronet, and never gave the world any cause to say a slanderous word. True she went to court, and was about the person of the Queen, but so were many other young ladies, and Her Majesty was a most virtuous and amiable lady.

Whatever his motive might have been,

Charles took an unusual interest in the restoration of the home of his favourite, and ran in debt to many worthy tradespeople for the decorations and embellishments which it was his royal will should be put up. Nothing would do but that the place should be purified with fire after its Puritan occupation; and certainly the worthy people who had enjoyed it under Cromwell had left it very dirty. Excess of holiness and dirt very often go together, and the banqueting hall had been made stables of, and the dainty private apartments of the ladies of the family had been used as the dwelling places of rough men who knew more about fighting than the usages of gentlemen.

It was a mercy the whole place was not destroyed in the vigorous efforts to purify it that were thought necessary. I was shown the traces of the cleansing fires in more than one part of the building when I was familiar enough with it to roam about and explore it. I saw it first on a sunny afternoon in the early autumn, when everything around it was looking its loveliest, and the sun was shining on the old grey front, and lighting up the windows into specks of dazzling light.

I had been met at the nearest station, some two miles away, by the carriage and well-trained servants, who treated me, Magdalen Ormsby, as if I had been a duchess. I had been rather nervous as I travelled down from town as to what manner of reception I should meet with. Lady St. Colomb had been kindness itself to me when she came to see me, but then I was in my little London lodging and adrift in the world. Now that she had actually engaged me as her dependent, a member of her household, I might have to sink into a very different place and—

I checked myself in this strain of wondering. Who was I that I should expect or even hope for any different treatment from any other salaried person in the house? I should be thankful when the introduction to my new duties was over, and I had shaken down into my place—that was all. The train steamed quietly into the little station of Rippledale—a quaint picturesque place that looked as if the busy world was a long way off—as indeed it was for any traffic that affected it. It was built mainly for the convenience of the Priory, and the Earl and Countess took an interest in its appearance and the well-being of the few officials there. A servant out of livery put his head in at the carriage window.

"Miss Ormsby?" he said, dubiously.

"Yes," I replied, "that is my name."

"The carriage is here, if you please, miss, and my lady desired me to give you this note."

He handed me out and put a note into my hand. It was very short, but set me at my ease at once.

"MY DEAR MISS ORMSBY.—Unexpected visitors have prevented our meeting you; you will pardon it I am sure. Johnson will bring you safely to us.—Yours truly,

"H. MEREDYTH."

"Her ladyship is very kind," I said, trying with all my might to appear quite at my ease and not afraid of this exceedingly polite and grand-looking person, whom I concluded to be "Johnson." He handed me into the carriage with the utmost attention, and saw to my luggage, which looked extremely mean and small in connection with the prancing horses and the elegant carriage, and then took his seat beside the driver.

"That is the Priory, miss," he said, presently, when a turn in the road brought us in view of the house. "This is considered the finest view of it."

"It is very beautiful," I replied. "And oh, what's that?"

It was whirling, dancing, rushing water, and I had no idea we were near any river. Seen through the trees it had a fairy-like effect, and shone white and sparkling like thousands of diamonds.

"That's the White Lady's Pool, miss," he said. "A pretty place, though the family

"No, nothing! But I shall make a will, and tell him where to find the family diamonds, and if you will be content with them as a pledge, and to receive the bulk of the money yearly from me, not through my solicitors, I will bring the jewels up to town next week, and you can see for yourself that I have not over-rated them. They are worth even more than I have stated."

"I must charge interest as well, you know," he replied, confidentially; "heavy interest, as this is such a curious out-of-the-way transaction. *Secrets* always cost dear, and ten thousand is a large sum, so we will have to say thirty-five per cent. If you will come up again next week, or week following, we will have a look at the diamonds and decide the bargain."

"Very well," said his client, rising, and feeling that she was not at all a bad woman of business. "And you will have the money ready for me when I come, won't you?"

"Yes, I'll see about it. But before we do anything serious, you will have to tell me your name—under the strictest secrecy, of course!"

"Must I?" she asked, doubtfully.

"Certainly you must!" he replied, emphatically.

"Then my name is Lady Ravenhill, of Brookford, Blankshire."

"Lady Ravenhill! Not the wife of that wild young fellow that used to be in the Guards about five or six years ago?"

"My husband was in the Guards," she replied, stiffly.

"Ay! He made the money fly!" admiringly. "Thought no more of fifty per cent. than it was fivepence; but I suppose he has sown his wild oats long ago. 'Lord!'—laughing—"to think that his wife would be coming to me too. Well, well, the world's a fanny place!" and seeing that his humour did not correspond with his lady customer's countenance, he abruptly changed the subject, conducted her to the outer door with all due deference, called a hansom, mentally noted her pretty feet, and saw her off the premises with half-a-dozen bows.

As he turned back into his own special den, he rubbed his hands with unction, and wished with all his strength (we won't say heart) that good luck would send him such a customer a little oftener. "Something to be made out of a client like that! She was as free with the coin as her husband had been, and terribly in *extrait*, which was more than could be said for him."

This goose who was to lay such golden eggs went home with a comparatively lighter heart now. She need not tremble at every ring of the bell, fearing the entrance of the dreaded Mr. Digby to have his account settled. She had done a good day's work, and her very best; but she brought back with her the commencement of a very bad cold, which she caught standing about in a draughty station for half-an-hour, and then getting into a hot, closely-packed first-class carriage, then out again into an open Victoria sent to meet her by some blundering mistake.

This cold settled upon her chest, and kept her in bed for three weeks; and she often asked herself, as she lay there, listlessly staring at the wall-paper, and listening to the tiresome ticking of the clock, would it not be a merciful release to her if she could die!

How wretched her life was! How blank everything around her looked! Nothing to cling to in the shape of hope—nothing to look forward to! Who would miss her? The Fortescues and a few Seabeach friends might perhaps be sorry, and that would be all. As to Hugh, her death would be a blessed release to him. She alone knew his secret, and dead women are safer than living ones, and he would be free to marry Conny Derwent!

How many events had crowded themselves into this one year, this one winter!—her discovery by her husband, the murder, the life of agony she had lived ever since, loving yet loathing the man whose name she bore; Mr.

Digby's disclosure, his odious bargain, his rapacity, audacity, and insolence, his fury at her illness, and his enforced waiting; her quarrel with Hugh at the ball, his entreaties and his reproaches, rang in her ears still! Could it be true what he said about loving her always? What he had told her about Lord Firstflight, was but a faint outline of a career which an officious lady acquaintance had filled in with a brush steeped in the blackest of dyes?

He had been married, divorced, had eloped half-a-dozen times, was more than suspected of evil doings on the turf, of cheating at cards, &c., &c.

He had called incessantly with cards of inquiry, game, flowers, fruit; nothing in the shape of a rebuff could shake him off where once his fancy fastened, and Eleanor had reason to deplore the day she made his acquaintance. On that point, at least, Hugh was right, and she was wrong. He, Lord Firstflight, had rallied her about her long *staid life* with her husband. "He looked as if he was showing you up about something, if I might hazard such an idea! He looked as if something had put him out!"

"And so it had," she answered, rashly; "he was blowing me up, as you call it."

"You don't seem to have taken it to heart then," her companion observed, with a smile of approbation.

"Oh, dear, no!" with well-assumed gaiety. Eleanor often reproached herself for this speech, but reproaches were of no use. Nothing could recall the words; she only hoped that Lord Firstflight would forget them. Vain hope! Things he ought to have remembered he always almost invariably forgot; but things that would be as well consigned to the limbo of his mind, his mind clung to most tenaciously.

In the early days of April Lady Ravenhill was convalescent, and downstairs in the little drawing-room, seated before the fire, with a shawl over her shoulders, one wet afternoon. It was her first appearance below, and she felt inexpressibly dreary and miserable, with not a soul to speak to, not a voice to say, "I'm glad to see you down again," not even a new book to read. Was ever anyone in the world as much alone as she was?

Neither father, mother, brother, or sister, aunt, or uncle, and but one cousin. She wished she had been born a poor girl, one of a large, cheerful, busy family. Oh! how she envied those who had a happy, lively, bright home! How gladly would she change, and give up money, carriages, maid, horses—everything, just for a little human affection. What good to her was this big, dreary, empty house, with no one to speak to from day's end to day's end? It was more like solitary confinement than anything else!

As she sat before the fire turning over these thoughts in her mind, with two large tears rolling down her pale cheeks, she was startled by a footstep on the soft carpet between her and the door; and, looking hastily round, she beheld Mrs. Derwent advancing upon her in all the magnificence of brown velvet and furs.

"Don't rise!" she said, stretching out a well-gloved hand. "I told them not to announce me! I thought I would give you a pleasant surprise!" seating herself, and unfastening her coat, quite at her ease. "So you've been laid up with a bad cold, I hear, and, poor soul, you do look wretched—miserable!"

"Oh! I'm much better!" said Eleanor, with an attempt at cheerfulness, "and I hope I'll soon be all right!"

"You don't look very happy!" said the other, abruptly. "You have something on your mind!"

"I!" colouring faintly. "Why should you say so? What an odd idea to occur to you!"

"Is it? And, *older still*, I think I know what is preying on you, like the worm in the bud! You believe!" leaning forward, and speaking in a whisper, after glancing cautiously round the room, "You believe that Hugh committed that murder! Now, you need not

speak, your white face speaks for you! No wonder, under such circumstances, you did not hit it off! If you cared for him as much as I do for a dog, you would not have credited him with such a deed! I believe him as innocent as I am!" she continued, proudly; "but there, I am different to you. I know him, and I love him, and you do neither the one nor the other!" audaciously. "Stop!" putting up her hand. "Let me say what I came to tell you. Only for you and your money Hugh would have married me, so I hated you, and if I could have done it without detection I would have killed you with no more compunction than I would kill a wasp but I won't! So never tremble and shrink away, your poor, miserable creature! Now I pity you. The fates have woven a curious life for you. They gave you back your sight and your husband—a husband foolishly in love with you—but you soon damped his transports; and, if all I hear be true, completely extinguished his affection. He has left you for ever. Is it not the case?"

"It is!" returned Eleanor, with extraordinary composure.

"Then I am avenged!" said the other, triumphantly. "He thought to clear himself in your eyes, to lead a life of bliss to which Arcadia itself would be a mere joke, and in two months it is all over—for ever! It is clear you have offended him now past forgiveness, and will never see him again—never! I know him. He is forbearing for a long time, but once you pass the rubicon, good-bye!" nodding her head, emphatically. "You two have lived a life apart ever since you came here!" here she paused, and looked at her companion, inquiringly.

"How do you know? What grounds have you for saying this?" said the other, with averted eyes.

"I know everything. I have ways and means. I know, if you wish for full details, from the servants. Hugh's valet was in my pay!"

"I wonder you have the face to sit there and say so!" exclaimed Eleanor, indignantly confronting her.

"Who is to know?" said the other, lightly.

"If you repeat what I tell you, I shall deny every word of it. I warn you—I am speaking to you now as woman to woman, and what I say is for your ear alone, and I have no soraples!"

"My ear is very much obliged to you!" sarcastically. "You have told it that at the time you would have murdered me without compunction, that you love my husband, that you have a paid spy under our roof. Is there anything else?" ironically.

"No, not much. I am going abroad for a long time, and I felt a burning desire to come and look at you, and see if you were as wretched as they said."

"You mean the servants?" contemptuously.

"Never mind who I mean! And you are. What a life poor Hugh must have had! A moping, silent companion, whom he only saw at dinner, who never spoke, and must have nobly represented the traditional Death's head at the feast! A woman, who in her own mind, had branded him as murderer! Poor fellow! No wonder he was glad to wrench himself free from such fascinating society!" with a withering sneer. "I think, in the matter of patience, he outvalled the prophet Job! Another man would have thrust you penniless outside his door within two days, and he has endured you for months, dowered you nobly, and left you in possession of a princely establishment—the more fool he! Well, *au revoir*!" rising, and leisurely fastening her furs. "I won't say good-bye, for I know we shall meet again!" So saying she nodded in a patronizing manner to her stupefied hostess, and sailed forth out of the room as silently as she had entered it. In a moment more the crunching of wheels upon gravel testified to her departure, and Eleanor felt as if she had but just awakened from some bad dream; and completely broken down between mental suffering and physical weakness,

leant her face upon her hands, and burst into a passion of tears.

Whilst Mrs. Derwent, who had borrowed the Bruce's brougham, especially to drive over and pay a farewell visit to her dear friend, Lady Ravenhill, leant back in that very comfortable conveyance, with a smile of dreamy satisfaction on her hard, handsome face, and with a warm conviction in her own mind that she had done a good morning's work—had enjoyed her excursion immensely—and that there was not the shadow of a doubt but that the Ravenhills had parted for ever.

(To be continued.)

TIGHT-ROPE dancing dates back to very early times. Terence has a reference to it. Froissart records this feat at the entry of Isabel of Bavaria, queen to Charles VI. of France, into Paris—"There was a mayster came out of Geane; he had tied a corde upon the hyghest house on the brydge of Saynt Michell over all the houses, and the other ende was tyed to the hyghest tower of Our Ladye's Church; and, as the quenne passed by, and was in the great strete called Our Lady's strete, by cause it was late, this sayd mayster, wyth two brinyngye (burning) candelles in hys handes, issued out of a little stage that he had made on the heighth of Our Ladye's tower, swynginge as he went upon the corde all along the great strete, so that all that saw him hadde marvayle how it might be; and he bore styll in his handes the two brinyngye candelles, so that he might well be sene all over Parys and two myles without the city. He was such a tomler that his lightness was greatly praised." A similar feat was performed before Edward VI., when he passed in procession through the city of London, in February, 1546, previous to his coronation.

EGG DANCE IN INDIA.—The Indian egg dance is not, as one might expect from the name given it, a dance upon these fragile objects. It is executed in this wise: The dancer, dressed in a corsage and very short skirt, carries a willow wheel of moderate diameter fastened horizontally upon her head. Around this wheel threads are fastened, equally distant from each other, and at the end of each of these threads is a slip-noose, which is kept open by a glass bead. Thus equipped, the young girl comes toward the spectators with a basket full of eggs, which she passes around for inspection, to prove that they are real, not imitations. The music strikes up a jerky, monotonous strain, and the dancer begins to whirl around with great rapidity. Then, seizing an egg, she puts it in one of the slip-nooses, and with a quick motion throws it from her in such a way as to draw the knot tight. The swift turning of the dancer produces a centrifugal force which stretches the thread out straight like a ray shooting from the circumference of the circle. One after another the eggs are thrown out in these slip-nooses until they make a horizontal aureole or halo above the dancer's head. Then the dance becomes more rapid—so rapid, in fact, that it is difficult to distinguish the features of the girl. The moment is critical; the least false step, the least irregularity in time, and the eggs dash against each other. But how can this dance be stopped? There is but one way—remove the eggs in the same way in which they have been put in place. This operation is by far the most delicate of the two. It is necessary that the dancer, by a single motion, should take hold of the egg and remove it from the noose. A single false motion of the hand, the least interference with one of the threads, and the general arrangement is suddenly broken, and the whole performance disastrously ended. At last all the eggs are successfully removed, and the dancer stops, and without seeming in the least dizzy by the dance of twenty-five or thirty-five minutes, advances with a firm step to the spectators and presents them with the eggs, which are immediately broken in a flat dish to prove that there is no trick in the performance.

GOLDEN GRAIN.

CHAPTER XIX.

"THE STately HOMES OF ENGLAND."

STately indeed! And Priory Park was one of the statelyst of them. In the very prettiest part of Surrey, within convenient distance of town, and yet as far in the country and as complete in its own seclusion as if the busy metropolis had been a hundred miles away. It was the very perfection of a beautiful English home, and I think the poetess must have had just such a one in her mind when she wrote her ever-quoted poem.

It was very old—so old, indeed, that part of it, a ruin now, dated back to the times when King Alfred ruled in England, and tried to civilise his rough people and to teach them something besides the way to cut the throats of their enemies. The story of the old keep was something apocryphal I believe, but it was nice to believe in it, and the St. Colomb's did that to their heart's content. The newest of the house was of the time of the Stuarts, and the older portion which was habitable dated from Queen Elizabeth. There had been a Meredyth of repute in her day, who had served her so well that she had rewarded him by making him Earl St. Colomb, with a large grant of land to add to his estates.

That the lad was taken by force from a monastery, and that the house itself was annexed, and the monks turned out to do as they could, was of little consequence. The Catholics had fallen on evil times in the days of the virgin queen; and the Meredyths came and settled, and made their home where the holy men had sung hymns and done charitable deeds, and ruled the land all round them like feudal barons or kings in little. The place had never lost its name. It was the Priory still; and there was something peaceful and religious-looking about the grey stone walls, and the mullioned windows and the ivy that had thickened with the growth of ages, till it looked like a part of the wall itself.

Even Cromwell, who did so much to destroy the characteristics of all the old family places he came across, and who thought even churches none too good to stable his troopers' horses in, had not been able to efface the old world grandeur of Priory Park. The owner of it in his day had had to fly for his life, because he would not fight against his king, nor give his allegiance to the iron-handed Puritan who carried religion at the point of the sword, and killed and ravaged with a prayer on his lips, and death in his hand.

It seemed then as if a Meredyth would never reign in the old house again, but better times came for the adherents of the luckless Stuarts. The king had his own again, and a reaction set in as violent as the previous tempest had been. Charles the Second flung bounties and rewards broadcast to all who had helped him in his need, and Hugh Meredyth of Priory Park had been one of the most efficient. An exile himself, he had aided his exiled master, and when Charles rode once more through the streets of London with the people who had murdered his father shouting for joy at his return, his old friend and comrade was close beside him. If he was an ingrate to others he was not to Hugh Meredyth, and took a royal interest in the redecoration and purifying of the Priory after its desecration by the Cromwellian troops.

There were spiteful people who said that it was because the daughter of the house was remarkably pretty and winning that His Majesty took all the trouble, but there was never anything beyond talk. Mistress Elfrida Meredyth was a most discreet young person, and married a baronet, and never gave the world any cause to say a slanderous word. True she went to court, and was about the person of the Queen, but so were many other young ladies, and Her Majesty was a most virtuous and amiable lady.

Whatever his motive might have been,

Charles took an unusual interest in the restoration of the home of his favourite, and ran in debt to many worthy tradespeople for the decorations and embellishments which it was his royal will should be put up. Nothing would do but that the place should be purified with fire after its Puritan occupation; and certainly the worthy people who had enjoyed it under Cromwell had left it very dirty. Excess of holiness and dirt very often go together, and the banqueting hall had been made stables of, and the dainty private apartments of the ladies of the family had been used as the dwelling places of rough men who knew more about fighting than the usages of gentlemen.

It was a mercy the whole place was not destroyed in the vigorous efforts to purify it that were thought necessary. I was shown the traces of the cleansing fires in more than one part of the building when I was familiar enough with it to roam about and explore it. I saw it first on a sunny afternoon in the early autumn, when everything around it was looking its loveliest, and the sun was shining on the old grey front, and lighting up the windows into specks of dazzling light.

I had been met at the nearest station, some two miles away, by the carriage and well-trained servants, who treated me, Magdalen Ormsby, as if I had been a duchess. I had been rather nervous as I travelled down from town as to what manner of reception I should meet with. Lady St. Colomb had been kindness itself to me when she came to see me, but then I was in my little London lodging and adrift in the world. Now that she had actually engaged me as her dependent, a member of her household, I might have to sink into a very different place and—

I chocked myself in this strain of wondering. Who was I that I should expect or even hope for any different treatment from any other salaried person in the house? I should be thankful when the introduction to my new duties was over, and I had shaken down into my place—that was all. The train steamed quietly into the little station of Rippledale—a quaint picturesque place that looked as if the busy world was a long way off—as indeed it was for any traffic that affected it. It was built mainly for the convenience of the Priory, and the Earl and Countess took an interest in its appearance and the well-being of the few officials there. A servant out of livery put his head in at the carriage window.

"Miss Ormsby?" he said, dubiously.

"Yes," I replied, "that is my name."

"The carriage is here, if you please, miss, and my lady desired me to give you this note."

He handed me out and put a note into my hand. It was very short, but set me at my ease at once.

"MY DEAR MISS ORMSBY,—Unexpected visitors have prevented our meeting you; you will pardon it I am sure. Johnson will bring you safely to us.—Yours truly,"

"H. MEREDYTH."

"Her ladyship is very kind," I said, trying with all my might to appear quite at my ease and not afraid of this exceedingly polite and grand-looking person, whom I concluded to be "Johnson." He handed me into the carriage with the utmost attention, and saw to my luggage, which looked extremely mean and small in connection with the prancing horses and the elegant carriage, and then took his seat beside the driver.

"That is the Priory, miss," he said, presently, when a turn in the road brought us in view of the house. "This is considered the finest view of it."

"It is very beautiful," I replied. "And oh, what's that?"

It was whirling, dancing, rushing water, and I had no idea we were near any river. Seen through the trees it had a fairy-like effect, and shone white and sparkling like thousands of diamonds.

"That's the White Lady's Pool, miss," he said. "A pretty place, though the family

"No, nothing! But I shall make a will, and tell him where to find the family diamonds, and if you will be content with them as a pledge, and to receive the bulk of the money yearly from me, not through my solicitors, I will bring the jewels up to town next week, and you can see for yourself that I have not over-rated them. They are worth even more than I have stated."

"I must charge interest as well, you know," he replied, confidentially; "heavy interest, as this is such a curious out-of-the-way transaction. *Secrets* always cost dear, and ten thousand is a large sum, so we will have to say thirty-five per cent. If you will come up again next week, or week following, we will have a look at the diamonds and decide the bargain."

"Very well," said his client, rising, and feeling that she was not at all a bad woman of business. "And you will have the money ready for me when I come, won't you?"

"Yes, I'll see about it. But before we do anything serious, you will have to tell me your name—under the strictest secrecy, of course!"

"Must I?" she asked, doubtfully.

"Certainly you must!" he replied, emphatically.

"Then my name is Lady Ravenhill, of Brookford, Blankshire."

"Lady Ravenhill! Not the wife of that wild young fellow that used to be in the Guards about five or six years ago?"

"My husband was in the Guards," she replied, stiffly.

"Ay! He made the money fly!" admiringly. "Thought no more of fifty per cent. than it was fivepence; but I suppose he has sown his wild oats long ago. 'Lord!'—laughing—"to think that his wife would be coming to me too. Well, well, the world's a fanny place!" and seeing that his humour did not correspond with his lady customer's countenance, he abruptly changed the subject, conducted her to the outer door with all due deference, called a hansom, mentally noted her pretty feet, and saw her off the premises with half-a-dozen bows.

As he turned back into his own special den, he rubbed his hands with unction, and wished with all his strength (we won't say heart) that good luck would send him such a customer a little oftener. "Something to be made out of a client like that! She was as free with the coin as her husband had been, and terribly in earnest, which was more than could be said for him."

This goose who was to lay such golden eggs went home with a comparatively lighter heart now. She need not tremble at every ring of the bell, fearing the entrance of the dreaded Mr. Digby to have his account settled. She had done a good day's work, and her very best; but she brought back with her the commencement of a very bad cold, which she caught standing about in a draughty station for half-an-hour, and then getting into a hot, closely-packed first-class carriage, then out again into an open Victoria sent to meet her by some blundering mistake.

This cold settled upon her chest, and kept her in bed for three weeks; and she often asked herself, as she lay there, listlessly staring at the wall-paper, and listening to the tiresome ticking of the clock, would it not be a merciful release to her if she could die!

How wretched her life was! How blank everything around her looked! Nothing to cling to in the shape of hope—nothing to look forward to! Who would miss her? The Fortescues and a few Seabeach friends might perhaps be sorry, and that would be all. As to Hugh, her death would be a blessed release to him. She alone knew his secret, and dead women are safer than living ones, and he would be free to marry Conny Derwent!

How many events had crowded themselves into this one year, this one winter!—her discovery by her husband, the murder, the life of agony she had lived ever since, loving yet loathing the man whose name she bore; Mr.

Digby's disclosure, his odious bargain, his rapacity, audacity, and insolence, his fury at her illness, and his enforced waiting; her quarrel with Hugh at the ball, his entreaties and his reproaches, rang in her ears still! Could it be true what he said about loving her always? What he had told her about Lord Firstflight, was but a faint outline of a career which an officious lady acquaintance had filled in with a brush steeped in the blackest of dyes?

He had been married, divorced, had eloped half-a-dozen times, was more than suspected of evil doings on the turf, of cheating at cards, &c., &c.

He had called incessantly with cards of inquiry, game, flowers, fruit; nothing in the shape of a rebuff could shake him off where once his fancy fastened, and Eleanor had reason to deplore the day she made his acquaintance. On that point, at least, Hugh was right, and she was wrong. He, Lord Firstflight, had rallied her about her long *the-dit* with her husband. "He looked as if he was showing you up about something, if I might hazard such an idea! He looked as if something had put him out!"

"And so it had," she answered, rashly; "he was blowing me up, as you call it."

"You don't seem to have taken it to heart then," her companion observed, with a smile of approbation.

"Oh, dear, no!" with well-assumed gaiety. Eleanor often reproached herself for this speech, but reproaches were of no use. Nothing could recall the words; she only hoped that Lord Firstflight would forget them. Vain hope! Things he ought to have remembered he always almost invariably forgot; but things that would be as well consigned to the limbo of his mind, his mind clung to most tenaciously.

In the early days of April Lady Ravenhill was convalescent, and downstairs in the little drawing-room, seated before the fire, with a shawl over her shoulders, one wet afternoon. It was her first appearance below, and she felt inexpressibly dreary and miserable, with not a soul to speak to, not a voice to say, "I'm glad to see you down again," not even a new book to read. Was ever anyone in the world as much alone as she was?

Neither father, mother, brother, or sister, aunt, or uncle, and but one cousin. She wished she had been born a poor girl, one of a large, cheerful, busy family. Oh! how she envied those who had a happy, lively, bright home! How gladly would she change, and give up money, carriages, maid, horses—everything, just for a little human affection. What good to her was this big, dreary, empty house, with no one to speak to from day's end to day's end? It was more like solitary confinement than anything else!

As she sat before the fire turning over these thoughts in her mind, with two large tears rolling down her pale cheeks, she was startled by a footstep on the soft carpet between her and the door; and, looking hastily round, she beheld Mrs. Derwent advancing upon her in all the magnificence of brown velvet and furs.

"Don't rise!" she said, stretching out a well-gloved hand. "I told them not to announce me! I thought I would give you a pleasant surprise!" seating herself, and unfastening her coat, quite at her ease. "So you've been laid up with a bad cold, I hear, and, poor soul, you do look wretched—miserable!"

"Oh! I'm much better!" said Eleanor, with an attempt at cheerfulness, "and I hope I'll soon be all right!"

"You don't look very happy!" said the other, abruptly. "You have something on your mind!"

"I!" colouring faintly. "Why should you say so? What an odd idea to occur to you!"

"Is it? And, odder still, I think I know what is preying on you, like the worm in the bud! You believe!" leaning forward, and speaking in a whisper, after glancing cautiously round the room, "You believe that Hugh committed that murder! Now, you need not

speak, your white face speaks for you! No wonder, under such circumstances, you did not hit it off! If you cared for him as much as I do for a dog, you would not have credited him with such a deed! I believe him as innocent as I am!" she continued, proudly; "but there, I am different to you. I know him, and I love him, and you do neither the one nor the other!" audaciously. "Stop!" putting up her hand. "Let me say what I came to tell you. Only for you and your money Hugh would have married me, so I hated you, and if I could have done it without detection I would have killed you with no more compunction than I would kill a wasp but I won't! I never tremble and shrink away, your poor, miserable creature! Now I pity you. The fates have woven a curious life for you. They gave you back your sight and your husband—a husband foolishly in love with you—but you soon damped his transports; and, if all I hear be true, completely extinguished his affection. He has left you for ever. Is it not the case?"

"It is!" returned Eleanor, with extraordinary composure.

"Then I am avenged!" said the other, triumphantly. "He thought to clear himself in your eyes, to lead a life of bliss to which Arcadia itself would be a mere joke, and in two months it is all over—for ever! It is clear you have offended him now past forgiveness, and will never see him again—never! I know him. He is forbearing for a long time, but once you pass the rubicon, good-bye!" nodding her head, emphatically. "You two have lived a life apart ever since you came here!" here she paused, and looked at her companion, inquiringly.

"How do you know? What grounds have you for saying this?" said the other, with averted eyes.

"I know everything. I have ways and means. I know, if you wish for full details, from the servants. Hugh's valet was in my pay!"

"I wonder you have the face to sit there and say so!" exclaimed Eleanor, indignantly confronting her.

"Who is to know?" said the other, lightly.

"If you repeat what I tell you, I shall deny every word of it. I warn you—I am speaking to you now as woman to woman, and what I say is for your ear alone, and I have no scruples!"

"My ear is very much obliged to you!" sarcastically. "You have told it that at the time you would have murdered me without compunction, that you love my husband, that you have a paid spy under our roof. Is there anything else?" ironically.

"No, not much. I am going abroad for a long time, and I felt a burning desire to come and look at you, and see if you were as wretched as they said."

"You mean the servants?" contemptuously.

"Never mind who I mean! And you are. What a life poor Hugh must have had! A moping, silent companion, whom he only saw at dinner, who never spoke, and must have nobly represented the traditional Death's head at the feast! A woman, who in her own mind, had branded him as murderer! Poor fellow! No wonder he was glad to wrench himself free from such fascinating society!" with a withering sneer. "I think, in the matter of patience, he outvalued the prophet Job! Another man would have thrust you penniless outside his door within two days, and he has endured you for months, dowered you nobly, and left you in possession of a princely establishment—the more fool he! Well, *au revoir!*" rising, and leisurely fastening her furs. "I won't say good-bye, for I know we shall meet again!" So saying she nodded in a patronizing manner to her stupefied hostess, and sailed forth out of the room as silently as she had entered it. In a moment more the crunching of wheels upon gravel testified to her departure, and Eleanor felt as if she had but just awakened from some bad dream; and completely broken down between mental suffering and physical weakness,

leant her face upon her hands, and burst into a passion of tears.

Whilst Mrs. Derwent, who had borrowed the Bruce's brougham, especially to drive over and pay a farewell visit to her dear friend, Lady Ravenhill, leant back in that very comfortable conveyance, with a smile of dreamy satisfaction on her hard, handsome face, and with a warm conviction in her own mind that she had done a good morning's work—had enjoyed her excursion immensely—and that there was not the shadow of a doubt but that the Ravenhills had parted for ever.

(To be continued.)

TIGHT-ROPE dancing dates back to very early times. Terence has a reference to it. Froissart records this feat at the entry of Isabel of Bavaria, queen to Charles VI. of France, into Paris—"There was a mayster came out of Geane; he had tied a corde upon the hyghest house on the brydge of Saynt Michell over all the houses, and the other ende was tyed to the hyghest tower of Our Ladye's Church; and, as the quenne passed by, and was in the great strete called Our Lady's strete, by cause it was late, this sayd mayster, wyth two brinnynge (burning) candelles in hys handes, issued out of a little stage that he had made on the heygh of Our Ladye's tower, swynginge as he went upon the corde all along the great strete, so that all that saw him hadde marvayle how it might be; and he bore styll in his handes the two brinnynge candelles, so that he might well be sene all over Parys and two myles without the city. He was such a tomler that his lightness was greatly praised." A similar feat was performed before Edward VI., when he passed in procession through the city of London, in February, 1546, previous to his coronation.

EGG DANCE IN INDIA.—The Indian egg dance is not, as one might expect from the name given it, a dance upon these fragile objects. It is executed in this wise: The dancer, dressed in a corseage and very short skirt, carries a willow wheel of moderate diameter fastened horizontally upon her head. Around this wheel threads are fastened, equally distant from each other, and at the end of each of these threads is a slip-noose, which is kept open by a glass bead. Thus equipped, the young girl comes toward the spectators with a basket full of eggs, which she passes around for inspection, to prove that they are real, not imitations. The music strikes up a jerky, monotonous strain, and the dancer begins to whirl around with great rapidity. Then, seizing an egg, she puts it in one of the slip-nooses, and with a quick motion throws it from her in such a way as to draw the knot tight. The swift turning of the dancer produces a centrifugal force which stretches the thread out straight like a ray shooting from the circumference of the circle. One after another the eggs are thrown out in these slip-nooses until they make a horizontal aureole or halo above the dancer's head. Then the dance becomes more rapid—so rapid, in fact, that it is difficult to distinguish the features of the girl. The moment is critical; the least false step, the least irregularity in time, and the eggs dash against each other. But how can this dance be stopped? There is but one way—remove the eggs in the same way in which they have been put in place. This operation is by far the most delicate of the two. It is necessary that the dancer, by a single motion, should take hold of the egg and remove it from the noose. A single false motion of the hand, the least interference with one of the threads, and the general arrangement is suddenly broken, and the whole performance disastrously ended. At last all the eggs are successfully removed, and the dancer stops, and without seeming in the least dizzy by the dance of twenty-five or thirty-five minutes, advances with a firm step to the spectators and presents them with the eggs, which are immediately broken in a flat dish to prove that there is no trick in the performance.

GOLDEN GRAIN.

CHAPTER XIX.

"THE STately HOMES OF ENGLAND."

STately indeed! And Priory Park was one of the statelyst of them. In the very prettiest part of Surrey, within convenient distance of town, and yet as far in the country and as complete in its own seclusion as if the busy metropolis had been a hundred miles away. It was the very perfection of a beautiful English home, and I think the poetess must have had just such a one in her mind when she wrote her ever-quoted poem.

It was very old—so old, indeed, that part of it, a ruin now, dated back to the times when King Alfred ruled in England, and tried to civilise his rough people and to teach them something besides the way to cut the throats of their enemies. The story of the old keep was something apocryphal I believe, but it was nice to believe in it, and the St. Colomb's did that to their heart's content. The newest of the house was of the time of the Stuarts, and the older portion which was habitable dated from Queen Elizabeth. There had been a Meredyth of repute in her day, who had served her so well that she had rewarded him by making him Earl St. Colomb, with a large grant of land to add to his estates.

That the lad was taken by force from a monastery, and that the house itself was annexed, and the monks turned out to do as they could, was of little consequence. The Catholics had fallen on evil times in the days of the virgin queen; and the Meredyths came and settled, and made their home where the holy men had sung hymns and done charitable deeds, and ruled the land all round them like feudal barons or kings in little. The place had never lost its name. It was the Priory still; and there was something peaceful and religious-looking about the grey stone walls, and the mullioned windows and the ivy that had thickened with the growth of ages, till it looked like a part of the wall itself.

Even Cromwell, who did so much to destroy the characteristics of all the old family places he came across, and who thought even churches none too good to stable his troopers' horses in, had not been able to efface the old world grandeur of Priory Park. The owner of it in his day had had to fly for his life, because he would not fight against his king, nor give his allegiance to the iron-handed Puritan who carried religion at the point of the sword, and killed and ravaged with a prayer on his lips, and death in his hand.

It seemed then as if a Meredyth would never reign in the old house again, but better times came for the adherents of the luckless Stuarts. The king had his own again, and a reaction set in as violent as the previous tempest had been. Charles the Second flung bounties and rewards broadcast to all who had helped him in his need, and Hugh Meredyth of Priory Park had been one of the most efficient. An exile himself, he had aided his exiled master, and when Charles rode once more through the streets of London with the people who had murdered his father shouting for joy at his return, his old friend and comrade was close beside him. If he was an ingrate to others he was not to Hugh Meredyth, and took a royal interest in the redecoration and purifying of the Priory after its desecration by the Cromwellian troops.

There were spiteful people who said that it was because the daughter of the house was remarkably pretty and winning that His Majesty took all the trouble, but there was never anything beyond talk. Mistress Elfrida Meredyth was a most discreet young person, and married a baronet, and never gave the world any cause to say a slanderous word. True she went to court, and was about the person of the Queen, but so were many other young ladies, and Her Majesty was a most virtuous and amiable lady.

Whatever his motive might have been,

Charles took an unusual interest in the restoration of the home of his favourite, and ran in debt to many worthy tradespeople for the decorations and embellishments which it was his royal will should be put up. Nothing would do but that the place should be purified with fire after its Puritan occupation; and certainly the worthy people who had enjoyed it under Cromwell had left it very dirty. Excess of holiness and dirt very often go together, and the banqueting hall had been made stables of, and the dainty private apartments of the ladies of the family had been used as the dwelling places of rough men who knew more about fighting than the usages of gentlemen.

It was a mercy the whole place was not destroyed in the vigorous efforts to purify it that were thought necessary. I was shown the traces of the cleansing fires in more than one part of the building when I was familiar enough with it to roam about and explore it. I saw it first on a sunny afternoon in the early autumn, when everything around it was looking its loveliest, and the sun was shining on the old grey front, and lighting up the windows into specks of dazzling light.

I had been met at the nearest station, some two miles away, by the carriage and well-trained servants, who treated me, Magdalen Ormsby, as if I had been a duchess. I had been rather nervous as I travelled down from town as to what manner of reception I should meet with. Lady St. Colomb had been kindness itself to me when she came to see me, but then I was in my little London lodging and adrift in the world. Now that she had actually engaged me as her dependent, a member of her household, I might have to sink into a very different place and—

I checked myself in this strain of wondering. Who was I that I should expect or even hope for any different treatment from any other salaried person in the house? I should be thankful when the introduction to my new duties was over, and I had shaken down into my place—that was all. The train steamed quietly into the little station of Ripplesdale—a quaint picturesque place that looked as if the busy world was a long way off—as indeed it was for any traffic that affected it. It was built mainly for the convenience of the Priory, and the Earl and Countess took an interest in its appearance and the well-being of the few officials there. A servant out of livery put his head in at the carriage window.

"Miss Ormsby?" he said, dubiously.

"Yes," I replied, "that is my name."

"The carriage is here, if you please, miss, and my lady desired me to give you this note."

He handed me out and put a note into my hand. It was very short, but set me at my ease at once.

"MY DEAR MISS ORMSBY.—Unexpected visitors have prevented our meeting you; you will pardon it I am sure. Johnson will bring you safely to us.—Yours truly,

"H. MEREDYTH."

"Her ladyship is very kind," I said, trying with all my might to appear quite at my ease and not afraid of this exceedingly polite and grand-looking person, whom I concluded to be "Johnson." He handed me into the carriage with the utmost attention, and saw to my luggage, which looked extremely mean and small in connection with the prancing horses and the elegant carriage, and then took his seat beside the driver.

"That is the Priory, miss," he said, presently, when a turn in the road brought us in view of the house. "This is considered the finest view of it."

"It is very beautiful," I replied. "And oh, what's that?"

It was whirling, dancing, rushing water, and I had no idea we were near any river. Seen through the trees it had a fairy-like effect, and shone white and sparkling like thousands of diamonds.

"That's the White Lady's Pool, miss," he said. "A pretty place, though the family

seldom come there. It's a bit of the river really. The river runs very close to the house on this side; it isn't more than half-a-mile away. That pool is a queer band of it—looks like a bit out of it like."

So Priory Park had yet another charm—it was on the river. The Thames went gliding by in all its beauty; and there would be boating and fishing, perhaps, just as there used to be sometimes, when we were very good and industrious at Wassenhanser.

We came into better sight of this curious pool, after going a little farther, and Johnson told me that it got its name of the White Lady's Pool from some tradition of remote ages, which set forth that a lady had drowned herself there for love's sake, and from the fact that her ghost was said to haunt the scene of her untimely end.

"But there have been more accidents there since that time," he said. "It's an awkward place is the pool, and if my lord could have it filled up and done away with altogether, I think he would. He don't like it."

"And would it be impossible?" I asked, interested, I hardly knew why, in what my escort was saying.

"It seems so, miss," he replied; "everything seems to wash right away into the river directly. There have been waggon loads of stuff put down. But the people my lord has consulted all say the same thing—it's no use. There's an underground or something of that sort that makes it impossible."

We were out of sight of the pool now and close to the house, and my heart was beating with all sorts of mingled feelings. These people impressed me very strangely. It was their great and unvarying kindness, I suppose; but I felt as if I were coming home as I neared the house. I had never known what home meant; the nearest approach to it had been at the school at Wassenhanser. I had been very happy there, but I had been alone. No mother came to fetch me when holiday-time came round, no father had expressed himself satisfied with me as I had heard other girls' fathers do when they had made a success. Should I find the first home I had ever known under the roof of Harry Meredyth's parents? It seemed so, for when the carriage drove up to a side-door there were more servants to wait upon me, and more messages from the lady of the house.

An elderly woman, who announced herself as her ladyship's "own woman," came forward to receive me and install me in my room—a pretty set of two, overlooking the park, and a long stretch of country outside the gates. I could just catch a glimpse of the river on the extreme right—not the pool we had passed, but a tranquil, flowing curve that just served to make the landscape perfect.

"My lady hopes you will like these rooms, miss," the woman said, throwing open the door of another in the corridor communicating with the turret in which my apartments were situated. "These are Lady Hilda's rooms; and the family all sleep in this wing."

"I like them very much," I said; "they could not be more comfortable or pretty."

"My lady was so sorry not to meet you," the lady's maid went on. "But her Grace the Duchess of Wantage came suddenly, and she could not well get away. Her grace is not got rid of in a hurry," she added, laughing; "and she's easily huffed."

"I don't know that I expected to be met at all," I said, quietly. "I expected to have to ask someone to show me the way; and walk from the station."

"My lady would never have allowed that," was the comfortable answer. "She was most particular with Johnson."

"And he was most particular in being attentive to me. What is that?"

"It is the first gong, miss; it is rather loud. What will you please to wear? Shall I help you to dress?"

"Shall I be expected downstairs?"

"To dinner, miss?"

"Yes."

"Surely, miss?" was the answer, in a tone of surprise.

"I did not know whether I should dine with the family," I said. "Lady St. Colomb did not mention anything about that, and—"

"Of course you will, miss. I heard her telling Hawkins about laying a cover for you, and where he was to put it. I will lay out your things, if you please, and then I must send the housemaid, if you don't mind. She understands dressing ladies. My own lady will wait on me."

I assured her I did not want a maid; not even for my hair, at which assertion she looked rather dubious, and retired, after laying out my very best dress and some simple lace ruffles and a fichu. I was not to be a paid dependent merely, then. I was to be, to a certain extent, on an equality; at any rate, as far as meals went. When should I see my lady, I wondered; not before I met them all at dinner now, I supposed. It would be rather an ordeal. Who would come and take me down? Would anybody, or should I have to find my way to the dining-room alone? I did not speculate long, for before my toilet was finished Lady St. Colomb and her daughter both came to my room and told me quite like old friends how glad they were to see me again, and how they hoped I should be happy with them.

Priory Park was home, there was no doubt of it; and I went downstairs with them with grateful tears dimming my eyes and ready to overflow on to my cheeks.

CHAPTER XX.

LADY HILDA MEREDYTH had been a somewhat unformed girl, though very beautiful, when I had seen her at Wassenhanser. I was astonished to see how she had developed, and what a fair, graceful creature she had become in the time that had gone by since that examination day. She was tall and fair, resembling her mother much more than her brother did; but there were the same eyes, with the resemblance to something that had haunted me ever since my first introduction to the family—Hugh's eyes and Harry's—though these expressions in each was different.

Lady St. Colomb was fairly brimming over with kindness and the desire to make me feel that I was to be at home with them, and her pleasant face looked so motherly, as she shook hands with me, and hoped I should make myself comfortable at Priory Park, that I could have found it in my heart to fling my arms round her neck and kiss her instead of returning her greeting with a few formal words.

"You mustn't be afraid of us, my dear," she said. "We are very homely people; my lord and myself like comfort better than fashion, and we live very simply. You know us all, I think; there's only Mr. Fairchild here to-day besides ourselves, and you had seen him before you ever saw us, you know."

The mention of Reuben Fairchild's name gave me a cold shiver—it always did. I could not account for my strange dread of him. He had been very polite when I had seen him; but there was a curious look in his eyes as he spoke to me as if he were trying to read my thoughts.

All fancy, I daresay, but uncomfortable, nevertheless. I must try and get rid of such ideas now that I was likely to see more of him. I silently made up my mind that I would see as little as possible, and it did not appear as if we should come much in contact.

All down the handsome staircase were pictures of value and old oak panelling that would have delighted the heart of the antiquarian. It was real; there were no æsthetic shams about Priory Park; and the carving of the ceiling of the fine old hall through which we passed to the dining-room was priceless in its beauty of design and faultless execution.

"We don't dine in the great hall when we

are alone," Lady St. Colomb said, as we passed through a stately compartment with a carved roof and stained windows through which the sun sent a thousand fantastic colours over us as we went by. "It is too large. We use that little blue dining-room off it—it isn't so handsome, perhaps, but it's more homelike."

A servant opened the door of the blue dining-room as she spoke, and we went into the most comfortable room I had ever seen for a small family. Its colour gave its name—the prevailing tint was blue, but toned down in a pleasant fashion with harmonising colours, and it was hung with pictures, portraits most of them. The familiar face of Hugh Meredyth looked down at me from over the mantelpiece as I entered. And Harry's laughing eyes and curly hair were between the windows just over the original, who was standing there ready to give me right cordial greeting.

The Earl came forward first and took my hand in a kindly fashion that made me forget his rank and think of him only as a kind, fatherly man, and a thorough gentleman.

"I am glad to see you, my dear," he said. "I hope you will get on with us and make a finished musician of Hilda here, in process of time. I recollect what you can do in that line very well."

"I will do my best, my lord," I said, and then Harry came forward and gave my hand a squeeze that it remembered for hours after.

"It's awfully jolly to think of your being here!" he said. "I hope you'll find us nicer than the Craddock tribe."

What a boy he was! He would never be anything else as far as warmth of heart and kindness were concerned, and I laughed and told him I was sure they were much nicer than my late employer.

"She was a cat!" Harry said, emphatically; and then we all laughed, and the Earl said that perhaps there was some reason in her indignation after all. She could not understand that young people could meet without thinking or doing evil; anyhow it had all ended well, and no harm had come of it.

"But there might have been harm," Harry said, emphatically. "Miss Ormsby might have been left all forlorn for ever so long without anything to do if it hadn't been for the matter here going to the rescue. Oh! there's Fairchild at last, and the soup; I'm awfully hungry."

We had been waiting for Mr. Fairchild, who had been despatched on some business to the other side of the park, and had only just returned in time to make a hurried toilet. He had evidently known nothing of the arrangements about my coming, and his start of surprise, and the curious look that came into his dark face, were rather disconcerting.

"Miss Ormsby here!" he said, coming forward to greet me.

"Here, and likely to stay here!" Harry said. "We are all going to have our musical education perfected at once, so we have engaged the Wassenhanser professors to take us in hand."

"Harry! said Lady St. Colomb, from her side of the table, "how very uncomfortably you put things. Miss Ormsby is—"

"She's just Miss Ormsby, and she understands what I mean, don't you?" he asked, and I laughed, and said I did perfectly. He wanted to make me feel at home, and to show Mr. Fairchild that I was as one of themselves.

Reuben Fairchild held the door open for us as we passed out—Lady St. Colomb, her daughter, and myself—and watched me with the same odd look as if he were revolving something in his mind, and trying to settle some curious problem to his satisfaction. He was most polite, not to say obsequious, and he bowed low as we passed him. It seemed to me that I caught a look of aversion on Lady Hilda's face also as she looked, and his eyes glared awfully as he rested his gaze on her. I was glad to get into the bright, cheerful drawing-room, and look at all the beautiful things that were scattered about there, and the pictures on the walls.

Hugh again! It seemed as if every room in the house held some memento of him. He was here at a fair, pretty child resting against a huge dog that looked large enough to eat him. And Lady Hilda told me that the beast had pulled him out of the water once when he was in imminent danger of being drowned.

"It was before my time, of course," she said; "I can't fancy cousin Hugh in frocks and fuffs; he has always been a big man to me. But papa says that is exactly like what he was at that time."

"You are very fond of him?" I said, longing to hear all there was for her to tell me about him, and yet dreading that some chance word might betray my own madness, and reveal how entirely he occupied my thoughts.

"Love him!" she replied with almost a tone of surprise at the question. "There is no one else in all the wide world that we love as well. Papa and mamma look on him as a second son, and as for me I adore him. He is the dearest fellow in all the world is Hugh."

A pang shot through me at her artless words. Doubtless it was intended that he should be dearer still at some time; that the family should be more united than they were at present even by her marrying her cousin. I think I turned pale at the thought, for Lady St. Colomb suddenly said to me, "My dear, are you cold? You look ill."

"Oh no, thank you," I said, hastily blushing though now, for I felt as if she could read my thoughts; "one cannot be cold such a day as this—it is perfectly lovely."

We had a delightful talk before the gentlemen joined us. Hilda showed me everything that was pretty in the room, and told me the names of all the people who figured on the walls. There was the Bark's good many years younger than he looked now, and her ladyship in a wonderfully painted white satin dress, looking as fresh and as fair as her daughter did now, though she told me the picture was painted after she was married to Lord St. Colomb.

There was Harry as a baby of twelve months, almost recognisable now for the same, by reason of his eyes and expression; and Lady Hilda, a fair, pretty girl of seven or so, all wild flowers and tilted leaves, looking like a veritable wood-nymph.

"It was the only way she would be taken, wilful child that she was," her mother said. "We wanted her painted."

"In my very best frock and with my hair properly brushed, and every frill about me bristling with propriety," Hilda said, laughing. "The artist said I was right, Miss Ormsby, think of that! I remember his saying that I had a natural instinct that was always true; and, after all, the picture turned out a picture—a beautiful painting, if it isn't a likeness."

It was a likeness and a wonderful one. She had altered very little in features; and the whole arrangement was a thing of beauty and a work of art that was worthy a place in any collection.

"Have you seen the new photographs?" Lady St. Colomb asked, when we settled ourselves down upon the sofa after our tour of the room. "I don't remember the name of the process; but they are curious, and I think not pretty."

"Ah, wait till you have seen someone else's face in them," Lady Hilda remarked. "We have only Mr. Fairchild in that style as yet. And there seems to be the glamour of the internal regions about his face in that portrait."

"My dear Hilda!" I said to myself. "Well, mamma, that's just what Harry said. And you know papa said that there was a queer something about the light, that made him look as if there were sulphur flames about him."

She brought an album from the table and opened it on her lap, turning over the beautiful photographs it contained till she came to one on a page by itself. It was a cabinet-sized photograph of Reuben Fairchild, taken by one process which made the face stand out in

strong relief from a background of exceeding blackness. Every feature seemed to be intensified, as it were, and the eyes had a glitter that was uncomfortable to look at, due doubtless, to the arrangement of light and the process by which the picture was taken. It was wonderfully lifelike withal, but, as Lady Hilda said, was suggestive of flames and eerie uncanny lights. I had never seen him look like that, but I felt sure he could do so, and I turned the page, feeling as if he were looking over my shoulder now.

"It is not a pretty style," I said. "I think I prefer the old fashion of light and shade; it is more natural."

Lady St. Colomb made some remark as to what I had said, and her daughter and I turned over the album and talked about the different faces therein, while she dropped into a doze, I think. Presently we came upon another portrait of Reuben Fairchild—a different style altogether; one in which he looked a sufficiently handsome man, with nothing particularly weird or evil about him. I passed it by without a word, and Hilda looked at me.

"You don't like him?" she said.

"No."

"Neither do I."

"Why not?"

"I don't know. Do you?"

"No."

"But you don't like him! It's a case of 'Dr. Fell.' I tell mamma it is instinct. She says it's nonsense; but he is not a good man, I am sure of it. He always seems to me to be plotting something. He watches papa and Harry as if he were a cat, and they were mice; and he is so horribly civil to me—horribly civil!"

It was odd that I should find some one who had precisely the same feeling towards Harry's former tutor as I had. It was exactly what I felt about Mr. Fairchild; and I felt as if he had been reading my thoughts, when the door opened the next moment, and the gentleman came in. The album was open at his portrait, and he took occasion to ask me what I thought of it.

"I like this one!" I said, pointing to the one before me; "but the other is not a pleasant one."

"Yet it is a good likeness!"

"A much better one really than this," I said, rather shortly. "It looks to me as if it pictured your thoughts as well as your features. There is a glamour over it, somehow, that makes it uncommon."

Lady Hilda had gone across the room to her father, who had called her; and we were alone for a moment.

"Will you allow me to congratulate you on your good fortune in coming here!" he said, bending over me, and monopolizing my attention completely. "You will find your lines have fallen upon pleasant places, Miss Ormsby."

"Everyone is very kind to me," I replied.

"I am to be congratulated, I know."

"They cannot help being kind. It would be out of their nature to be otherwise! May I give you a piece of advice, Miss Ormsby?"

"Certainly! It will be for me to take it or not, as I please."

"That, of course! Here it is, then. Never do anything to jeopardize your position here. Keep your place in the St. Colomb family; it will be to your interest hereafter."

"I hardly understand you, Mr. Fairchild," I said, rising, and moving away from him. "I did not want to talk to him any longer. I think Lady St. Colomb is beckoning to me. My position here is too new to make any plans for the future as yet, and I do not think I need discuss it with anyone except her ladyship herself."

I wanted to show him that I did not wish to talk to him, and I was afraid I had done it rudely, but he seemed to take no offence.

"What I said was well meant," he said, quietly. "Yes, her ladyship does want you, to give us a treat with some music, I hope. I am afraid your powers will be taxed some-

times; we are all so fond of music at Priory Park."

There was such a strange manner in his fashion of talking. It was almost as if he were the master of the house—at any rate, as if he had some power therein, of which I knew nothing.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SHADOW OF A SECRET.

It was to give them some music, as Mr. Fairchild had predicted, that I was called across the room, and the manner of asking me for it was so nice, and the attention paid me so genuine and sincere, that it completely hid the fact that I was there for the purpose, and made me feel at ease with them all, and in rapport with the instrument at once.

And such an instrument as it was to play upon! A splendid grand by a celebrated maker, that responded to every touch like a living thing, and sent out such sweet sounds as made me forget where I was and who were present, and everything, except the fact that I had real music at my command once more. We had had good pianos at Wassenhauer. Madame Lowenthal had been very particular on that score, and owed much of her success with her music pupils to the fact. The instrument on which we played in our concert-room was one of the best that Germany could produce, and even beginners were not allowed to spoil their ears and their tempers by practices on worn-out, tuneless things, such as Mrs. Wortley Craddock had deemed good enough for her children to learn upon.

Nothing I had ever touched came up to this one, and I think Lady St. Colomb saw the delight in my face.

"You like the instrument?" she said.

"It is the finest I ever touched!" I replied.

"What would you like me to play?"

"I should like to hear the very piece that we heard you play at school," she said, kindly. "We have often talked about it since. Have you it with you?"

My own Chorale. It was kind of them to remember it, and I told her I knew it by heart. I could play it without any music, and my fingers wandered over the keys in the prelude, while I hardly knew my own work in the beauty of the notes as they rippled and swelled under my hands.

"Thank you, thank you!" they all said, when I had done, and Lady Hilda's eyes were full of tears, the finest compliment that she could have paid me.

"That is lovely," she said. "I never knew such music could be got out of a piano."

"You will do as well yourself, by-and-by," I said to her, as she came and stood over me. "Remember how many years of my life I have devoted to it; I ought to play well."

They asked for another and another, and I lost myself in the music, and played as I had not had an opportunity of playing for a long time. I was conscious that Reuben Fairchild was watching me, with an odd expression on his face, and that Lord St. Colomb and Harry were sitting motionless, as if they were really enjoying the pieces I played. I think they were; they were all musical, but they had not had the training I had. The ex-tutor was the first to speak when, at length, I stopped.

"You have given us a treat, Miss Ormsby!" he said.

"Yes! indeed," echoed the Earl. "I had no idea what you could do in that way, my dear. I never heard anything better, not even from Arabella Goddard."

"You flatter me, my lord," I replied, smiling and delighted with his praise. "I was afraid I was boring you all. I almost forgot where I was; it is such a treat to me to touch such a piano."

"Boring us! If I were not afraid of fatiguing you I would ask for something else. Do you sing?"

"Not much. I was not one of Madame Lowenthal's show pupils in that respect. I was never regularly taught."

"But you do, I can see it. Will you not give us something—a ballad, or anything you like. We are all so fond of vocal music as well as instrumental."

"My repertoire is not extensive!" I said, turning over a pile of songs that Harry immediately put in front of me. "I am afraid I cannot go beyond the very simplest songs, and they are mostly German."

"Some of the German songs are the prettiest of any!" Mr. Fairchild said, advancing with a little book familiar enough to me, for it contained a selection used almost everywhere; and I sang two or three of the best known amongst them, and then a sudden impulse, I know not what, prompted me to wander off into something more familiar to English ears. I gave my fancy the rein, and sang "Off in the Stilly Night," with a verve and feeling that startled even myself. It had been a favourite song of my mother's. She was not much given to amusing herself by singing, or indeed anything else. Her whole life, as far as I had known it, had seemed to be one of mortification and discomfort; but she had had a splendid voice, and on rare occasions I had heard her use it.

As the last notes of the song died away on my lips I lifted my head, and saw that Reuben Fairchild was regarding me with a look so curious and weird that I was frightened. He was behind me; but I saw him in a large glass, and he saw that I did, and instantly altered the expression of his features, and composed his face to its natural expression. It was the same odd look which had disconcerted me on the very first time of my meeting, when Harry and he had come to my assistance, and pulled me off the stone by the Lurley Rock. It was almost a look of recognition—as if he knew me—and I am perfectly sure I had never seen him before.

I turned round after my song, rising to leave the piano, and the Earl caught hold of my arm. His face was very pale, and his lips quivered.

"That song, my dear!" he said. "Where did you learn it? Who taught you to play it like that?"

"My mother, my lord!" I said, "she used to sing it. I don't know that she ever taught me; but I caught it from her, I suppose, and it was in one of our books at school."

"Your mother was a musician, then, like yourself?"

"Oh, no! She had a sweet voice, and sometimes—very rarely—she used to sing. I am afraid I have chosen the song inopportunistically, for the tears were standing in his eyes. "It was the most familiar one in my head—that was all."

"No, no! I liked it very much. It is a beautiful song; but it is one that has its memories for me, that is all. You have given us a great treat, my dear—let me thank you for it!"

He pressed my hand and left the room, and we did not have any more music that evening. Lady Hilda and her mother and Harry gathered round me, and talked and asked questions about the old Wassenhauser days, and my life there. And Mr. Fairchild occupied himself with a book in a far corner of the room; but I could feel and see that he was watching, and listening—that not a word or a look of mine escaped him. It was very uncomfortable; but I hoped that I should get used to it in time, or that he would get tired. My presence there was certainly no business of his, and it was foolish of me to care about him; but I was strange as yet, and easily put out.

The Earl did not return till after Lady St. Colomb and her daughter had signified their intention of retiring, and Harry went away to his own den when we retired, leaving the tutor in the drawing-room by himself. It might have been fancy, born of my own excited imagination; but it seemed to me that I caught a look of intense hatred from the dark, silent man sent after the bright light-hearted young fellow as he went out at the door. He was altogether a disagreeable, uncomfortable sort of person, this Mr. Reuben Fairchild, and I was very thankful that no duties of mine

would be likely to bring us much in contact with each other.

I had had dreams about him that first night at Priory Park. He seemed to be an evil influence in my life, somehow; and in spite of the charming room, and the comforts of every kind that surrounded me, I could not sleep soundly. I dreamed of the pool I had seen, and that some spell took me thither to be dragged down into its black depths by Reuben Fairchild. Then my mother came in between us, and bade him desist.

"Better as it is, better as it is!" she said, and with the words sounding in my ears I woke to find that it was daylight, and the birds were twittering in the trees outside.

"I will get up," I said to myself. "It is the strange place that makes me wakeful. I shall shake off these megrims if I take a run outside."

I had never lost my habits of early rising, even in London, and I was soon dressed and refreshed after plentiful cold water, and found my way down to a side door, where a housemaid was cleaning. She looked at me with something of surprise, but made way respectfully for me to pass her, and I was soon in the gardens, all redolent with the sweet scents of early morning, and eloquent with the songs of the waking birds. It was a lovely scene, and to me, fresh from the wilderness of bricks and mortar, seemed like a veritable glimpse of paradise.

There was no one about, and I explored the pretty gardens and the park beyond for a good distance, till I found myself by a sudden turn in the road close to the pool that had such an uncanny association with it. I had not heard the story as yet, but it had something to do with death and drowning, and it was a weird-looking place even on this sunshiny morning. It was much closer to the house than I had any idea of. The view from the terraces and windows gave such an idea of distance, but it was very little over half a mile, and the sound of the rushing water could be distinctly heard from that side of the house.

It was a curious inlet of the river; like a little bay—almost landlocked; and indeed there was a spring, as well as the stream, to fill it. The water came tumbling round a rock that stood some height, and was covered with wild growth of shrubs and vegetation, into a deep pool that looked black and unfathomable under the overhanging trees. At the other side of the rock the water found its way back again to the river, broad and placid here, as if nothing ever disturbed its even surface, and looking as still and peaceful on this sunny morning as though it had never held any dark secret in its hidden depths since the day when it first began its course to the sea.

It was a curious place, caused, no doubt, by some odd formation of the river brink. And I stood looking at it, and thinking of the story in connection with it that Johnson had hinted at—how someone had died there for love, and taken to haunting the place ever since. Should I ever see her ghost, I wondered. I thought I should like to; it would be a new experience to me, and I half resolved that I would come down there some night and look for her.

"A curious place, Miss Ormsby!" I started violently. Where had Mr. Fairchild come from, that he was standing there by my side, looking as if he had risen out of the earth.

"Yes," I replied; "it is a curious place. I did not know you were here. I thought—"

"That you were enjoying the beauties of nature all alone? So you were, but you were so absorbed in your own thoughts that you did not hear me. I approached you like any ordinary mortal, I assure you; you must have been thinking of—"

"I have been thinking of the white lady and her ghost," I said. "I should like to see her."

"Oh! you have heard that story?"

"After a fashion. Johnson told me."

"I don't think that poor lady of long ago, whose very existence is apocryphal, is likely to trouble any one much. There have been other

deaths and other accidents here since her time."

"That is exactly what Johnson said. What deaths?"

"You will hear some time, I daresay, up yonder. If you like this place you and I will have it pretty much to ourselves. The family don't affect it. When they want to go on the river they go to the other bank, down yonder."

I secretly resolved to come there no more unless I was very well assured that Mr. Reuben Fairchild was a good many miles away; and I turned to leave the place, emphatically declining his offer of accompanying me to the house.

"I have incurred your displeasure somehow," he said. "I can see you don't like me, Miss Ormsby."

"We cannot always account for our feelings," I said. "We need not cross each other's path much; our ways lie differently ordered, and need not clash."

"Yet you would do well, if you knew it, to cultivate a little more kindly feeling for me," he said, with a curious mixture of warning and entreaty in his tone. "It might be of service to you that you little dream of."

I began to think that madness was at the bottom of his eccentricities, for he looked at me so oddly, as I inclined my head slightly and left him. I had not gone many steps before I discovered that I had left my pocket-handkerchief behind me. I had dropped it, and forgotten to pick it up again. I could see it lying on the ground, and went back for it. Reuben Fairchild was leaning on a rail that fenced the pool, communing with himself so intently that he did not see or hear me.

"If there is no Providence there is a fatality in it," I heard him say. "Her child alive, and I with the clue in my hand! Those laugh that win, and I hold the winning cards. Pride must have a fall, my lord, and it's drawing nearer—nearer—and more certainly every day."

He was surely mad, for he accompanied his speech with such a malicious burst of uncanny laughter that I beat a retreat as swiftly as I could, and got back to the house all aglow with exercise and excitement, and a firm resolve in my mind that my morning's outings should never again include any spot where I was likely to encounter Mr. Reuben Fairchild.

(To be continued.)

Words of praise are almost as necessary to warm a child into a genial life as acts of kindness and affection. Judicious praise is to children what the sun is to flowers.

A GLASS THRONE.—A throne of glass, made to order, was recently exhibited by an eminent firm. In shape it is a very wide arm-chair, seated with crimson velvet, overhung by a canopy supported on four pillars. The framework seems to be of glass throughout, cut and carved to the utmost possible brilliancy, in every kind of form and facet, but to ensure strength, stout iron rods run through every part. These, however, are plated, and thus become invisible themselves, whilst doubling the refracted incidence of the crystal. We have hardly words to describe intelligibly this very curious work of art, so elaborately is it ornamented. The canopy is a Moresque dome, half an octagon in shape, crowned by a ball set with spikes, and finely coriased round the cage. Three electric lights illumine it with dazzling effect, and it is designed to have them burning, if possible, on State occasions. A foot-stool to match stands in front. When we mention that each of the pine-shaped "finials" upon the arms of the chair have 324 facets mathematically accurate, it may be judged that this novel throne is a striking piece of work. It goes to India, but the sovereign's name and the price, are not to be stated. There is no concealment of the fact, however, that a couch of glass beside it costs 800 guineas, and we must multiply that sum very many times to find the value of the throne.

HER LAST POSY.

In the rarest of greenwood valleys
A motherless girl ran wild,
And the greenness and silence and gladness
Were soul of the soul of the child.
The birds were her gay little brothers,
The squirrels her sweethearts shy;
And her heart kept tune with the breezes,
And sailed with the clouds in the sky.
And angels kept coming and going,
With beautiful things to do;
And wherever they left a footprint
A daisy or buttercup grew.

She was taken to live in the city,
So thick with pitiless folk,
And she could not smile for its badness,
And could not breathe for its smoke.
And now, as she lay on her pallet,
Too weary and weak to rise,
A smile of ineffable longing
Brought dew to her faded eyes;
"Oh me, for a meek-eyed daisy,
Or a yellow buttercup dear!
Won't some kind angel remember,
And pluck one and bring it here?"

They brought her a bunch of daisies;
She took them with fingers weak,
And kissed them, and stroked them, and loved
them,
And laid them against her cheek.
"It was kind of the angels to send them,
And now I'm too tired to pray;
If God looks down at the daisies,
He'll know what I want to say."
They buried them in her bosom;
And when she shall wake and rise,
Why may not the flowers be quickened
And bloom in her happy skies?

F. L.

YOUNG AND SO FAIR.

CHAPTER XXII.

NEVER ANOTHER?

LORD WENTWORTH came down to luncheon, and showed no sign of outward agitation, except by the excessive pallor of his cheeks, which almost matched his silken hair in whiteness. He asked if Sibel had enjoyed herself at the dance, and endeavoured to show, by repeated questions, that in spite of his own anxieties he had still a kindly interest in her doings. She felt as if she could not talk about such frivolities, when she knew that his thoughts must be far away with his son in India; but Hugh helped on the conversation, and even brought a smile to Lord Wentworth's lips by a grotesque description of "The Mashers."

"I suppose we ought to have him over here some day," he said, musingly. "His father and I were rather life-long acquaintances than friends, though we were boys together at Eton. Your father, Hugh, was a great chum of Windsor's, and he paid him for his affection by a rascally trick."

"What was it? I should like to have had the chance of kicking him."

"You can't kick a man in his coffin, and I don't know if I have a right to rake up an old scandal. May I trouble you to pass the claret?"

Hugh got up politely, and filled the Viscount's glass, as the servants were always allowed to depart after the first beginning of luncheon, and after changing Sibel's plate, helped himself to some Stilton. "I thought Lady Windsor seemed to take me for a lunatic," he said presently. "She did nothing but stare at me, for a good half-hour."

"No doubt she was tracing a likeness to your father—she was in love with him long ago, and Windsor came between them."

"Why did my father bear it? Did he

know? I should like to have broken every bone in his body!" the boy's eyes flashing.

"He did not know it for many years—"

"Well, and what did he do?" with great eagerness.

"He died," in a low voice of exceeding pain. "I was with him at the time."

"But I thought he was killed out shooting," his mournful eyes opened wide with horror.

"Surely it was an accident, nothing more?"

"The verdict was one of accidental death, and no one quarrelled with it; but some of us thought that if he had not been tired of life, he wouldn't have been so careless. Poor fellow! I never liked Windsor after that, and when he asked leave to come to the funeral I gave him a hint that he had better stay away. Your mother knew nothing of it, poor soul, because Macdonald made her the kindest of husbands."

"But why did he marry her?" asked Sibel, who had been listening with the greatest interest.

"He liked her well enough, and she was a beautiful woman. She belonged to one of the old Castilian families, but through some political scrape her father lost his fortune, and she was reduced to great poverty. He had always a chivalrous nature, and beauty in misfortune had especial charms for him. He married her over there, and I remember well what a sensation she made, and how proud he was of his young bride."

"And yet he never loved her," objected Hugh, feeling that his beautiful mother had been basely treated.

"He did what he could for her, and made her as happy as possible. She never knew of his love for Eleanor Vansittart, so was disturbed by no pangs of jealousy."

"But it was a fraud from the beginning."

"I don't see it. Not one man out of a hundred marries his first love; and if he does he is often terribly disappointed. In our youth we exalt the one woman we admire most into a goddess, and surround her with the loveliest of illusions; but as we grow older we find she is not absolutely faultless, and grumble because she is mortal."

"I should not like her to have no faults, but I can fancy thinking her faults nicer than any one else's," said Hugh, dreamily.

"Yes, my dear boy; you would go to the end of the tether, and be capable of any insanity," said the old man, with a smile; "but the wisest way is never to give the whole heart, so as always to have a piece in reserve."

"I shouldn't like that," said Sibel, promptly. "But who will give you more, in spite of protestations?"

"I don't know," looking down shyly at her plate.

"And when you marry, do you think one image will fill your heart to the exclusion of everyone else?" looking at her in grave surprise.

A wave of crimson flooded cheek and brow, as she turned her head away without a word. Hugh having seen the guilty blush, and drawing his own conclusions answered for her: "Depends upon the bridegroom."

"That, I believe, is all ready settled," said Lord Wentworth, with a glance of reproof, for he was afraid lest the careless speech might hurt a young girl's feelings.

Hugh pushed back his chair, then waited courteously for Sibel to make the first move. As soon as she got up he walked out of the room, and left them alone. She walked round the table, and put her hand on the back of Lord Wentworth's chair.

"You think a marriage may be happy without an immense amount of love on both sides?" she said, timidly.

"Infinitely happier, as a rule; for there are fewer illusions to dispel, and in many cases they receive their death-blow in the honeymoon."

He took her hand and patted it kindly. "Don't let yourself be led away by the romantic talk of a boy like Hugh; believe me, the happiest path in life is the most prosaic."

Was matrimony, with Major Lushington for one of the parties concerned, to be called prosaic? she wondered to herself as she sat down on her favourite low-chair in the library. Hugh, who was lounging on the sofa, heaved a deep sigh.

"What is the matter?" looking round over her shoulder.

"I was thinking of my mother," in a low voice. "Fancy what she must have suffered, and no one guessed it!"

"But perhaps she did not know."

"Not know? when she was devoted to my father, everyone says that. Of course she wouldn't blazon it about, but she knew it. Trust a woman for that, if she has a heart at all!"

"They were very happy, Lord Wentworth says so."

"Because women like her know how to smile when their hearts are breaking. I have always felt there was a curse upon me, and now I know why. I see it all as clearly as if they had told me. They went on a visit to the Court, my father suspecting nothing. When there he found out that he had been cheated by his friend—that his first love had been true to him even when she married against her will—and the sequel you can guess. Don't you know? Can't you guess? He went home and shot himself!"

He covered his face with his hands, and his chest heaved.

"But it was an accident—indeed, it was!" her heart full of the truest sympathy.

"I was a child at the time," he said, hoarsely, "and I didn't understand; but I remember the servants talking and whispering at the end of the nursery, and someone said that the gun was not loaded with common shot."

She leant forward and took his hand, not knowing what to say.

"Pleasant thing for my mother!" he broke out, after a miserable pause. "He would rather die than live with her! Can't you fancy what she felt when they brought him home, and she knew the truth?"

"But she can't have known it! It would be too terrible!"

"There was a little miniature in his pocket, set round with pearls—the face was Elinor Vansittart's—and when she saw it she must have known that his life for the last few years had been a lie. Poor thing!" in a voice of intense feeling; "and I was a boy and knew nothing!"

"Did you know that Elinor Vansittart was Lady Windsor?"

"No; I thought I knew her face, and puzzled over it. She asked me to go over there, but how can I?"

"Why not? Lord Windsor is dead!"

"Yes, but his son is of the same blood."

"That is nothing! Would you hate me if my poor father had done a wrong to yours?"

"I should wish to. But you wouldn't let such a thing as this divide us?" suddenly fixing his large eyes on her face.

"No; why should it? I am so intensely sorry for you!"

"And you will like me all the same, in spite of it?" his lips trembling.

"Not all the same, but a thousandfold the better!" she answered, warmly, out of the depths of her compassion.

He raised her hand to his lips, and kissed it fervently.

"You are an angel!"

"Youth is the age of illusions!" she quoted, with a smile.

"Yes, but there are illusions which last till death. I could stake everything belonging to me that when you kiss me before I die you will seem to me as far above others as you do now!"

"Don't talk of death!" she said, with a shiver. "When it comes we may be in different quarters of the globe."

"No, we shan't be that," in a tone of quiet conviction. "If I had my choice, I would die now, just as we are, with your little hand in mine."

She drew it away with a pang of super-

anxious fear, as if she thought the wish could bring its fulfilment.

"What has become of all your fine visions of being of service to Mr. Wentworth?"

"Gone!" he said, listlessly.

"You must distinguish yourself somehow! I want to be proud of you!"

"Should you care a straw?"

"Yes, a great many! Do something great, that I may say with pride, 'Mr. Macdonald! I know him better than anyone else. We used to be like brother and sister!'"

He stood up behind her, and looked down at her pretty brown curls, as her head rested against the back of her chair. Surely they arranged themselves more daintily and prettily than the ordinary hair of other people!

"I will try to deserve the name!" he said, sadly. Then he knelt down, and keeping his arm round the top of the chair, so as almost to seem like a caress, he bent over her with wistful eyes.

"Will there never be any other?"

She raised her eyes to the beautiful face, but a few short inches from her own, and the tears gathered on her lashes. In it she saw such a fatal capacity for passion and pain. If he loved, he would love with his whole heart and soul, there would not be the smallest fragment kept in reserve, and such love in its madness brings its sure reward. He was sure to suffer; but must hers be the first hand to give him a stab?

"Don't ask, or you will spoil it all!" she said, entreatingly.

A gleam of joy passed over the sorrow in his face. "I won't ask; but I can wait!"

"There's nothing to wait for!" hastily, fearful lest he had misunderstood.

"I was so terribly down at the mouth, and this hope is a godsend!"

"There is no hope—only from this day forth want to be the best of friends, and you shall tell me your troubles, and I'll pour out a budget of mine."

"Begin at once!" pulling a stool towards him, to serve as a seat. "How about Lushington?"

"Mind, not a word to anyone else!" nodding up her finger, pleased to see the look of despair had already left his face. "I don't know that I ought to tell you; but I am so tired of keeping it all to myself!" with a little sigh, "and you are only a boy, you know."

"A year older than yourself," he put in quietly.

"Yes; but I must look upon you as a boy—unless you want me to call you Mr. Macdonald, and to keep it all to myself?" with an air of inquiry.

"Call me a baby—a long-clothed baby—if you like!"

"Only then it would be no use. Well, listen!" as he was already doing so with all his ears—this remark was unnecessary. "Last summer, for the first time in my life, I went to stay with Colonel and Mrs. Hay at Woodwich, and from that visit all my troubles date. I enjoyed it very much—too much, perhaps. The Hays were very good to me, and Major Lushington—"

"His lordship wishes to speak to Mr. Macdonald," said Landon's voice at the door.

"Very well, tell him I'll come at once," and though he would have given anything to stay, he scrambled to his feet, with apparent alacrity, for Lord Wentworth must never be kept waiting. "Hard lines to be interrupted just now," he said, regretfully.

"Perhaps it's a good thing," said Sibel, philosophically, as she had begun to be afraid of her promised confidence.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A TERRIBLE ACCIDENT.

"Would you like to come down to the station for a walk, or are you too tired?" said Hugh Macdonald about half-an-hour later, putting his head in at the library-door.

"Not a bit. I should like a breath of fresh

air," and Sibel rose from her chair with evident willingness. "But what are you going to the station for?"

"The *Globe*. Uncle is dying to have it, to see if there is any news."

"Of course. How strange that I never thought of it!" her cheeks losing their colour at the mere thought of what the news might be. "I shan't be a minute putting on my hat."

Taking it for granted that a woman's minute means five, Sibel was exact to the time she mentioned, and they started immediately. The air was fresh and cold, but there was a promise of spring in the green buds of the hedges, and half a fulfilment in the primroses that gemmed every bank. Rain had fallen in the morning, and the cup of every flower held a glistening drop, to which the declining rays of the sun gave the radiance of an opal. The western sky was lighted by a crimson glory, and the whole landscape of green pasture-lands and beech-covered hills was transfigured into such beauty as Eden must have worn, when neither sin nor sorrow had brought their clouds, and angels walked in the haunts of man. It seemed impossible to fear anything in the face of that hope-inspiring light; and the two so young in years, so formed for happiness, walked with light steps along the sunlit road, and, in spite of the anxiety in their hearts, laughed and chatted as they went.

"I wonder Lushington hasn't come back," said Hugh, looking over the hedge at a couple of horsemen wending their way homewards up the hill. "Don't you think you could tell me all about it now?"

"Certainly not, the high-road is not the place for confidences; and, Hugh, I just wanted to tell you," her face seeming to borrow some of the roseate hues of the sunset, as she came to an abrupt stop.

"I am listening, pray go on," fixing his eyes upon her in a way that did not tend to lessen her embarrassment.

"I wish you wouldn't stare so!" with a little laugh.

"Is that all?" carefully removing his glance to the mud at his feet, though a thoroughly English boy would probably have stared all the longer out of pure mischief. "I really thought something was coming."

"And so it is," with great gravity. "Do you know I have been thinking seriously about last night?"

"And so have I."

"Nonsense, you haven't an idea what I mean. I never like to own myself in the wrong, but I'm not quite sure," lowering her voice so much that he had to come very close to hear what she said. "I mean, I think, perhaps, that people who knew nothing about me might have thought that I was flirting."

"Not a doubt of it," he said, unexpectedly.

"How dare you say so!" looking up at him in breathless indignation.

"Of course, only the people who knew nothing about you," with a grave bow, although a smile lurked about the corners of his mouth.

"Yes, so it really didn't matter, and for the future I'm going to turn over a new leaf."

"But supposing we all prefer the other side of the page?"

"Then you mustn't have it. I am going to alter my manners completely, and I shall never dance more than twice with any man," with great decision.

"Thank heaven, I'm a boy; you said so yourself," he added, quickly, as if expecting a contradiction.

"Yes; but you have a most objectionable habit of talking like a man. In the library just now," the blush returning, "I should have snubbed you much more, but of course it was all nonsense."

No answer.

"It was all nonsense, say so at once, or else—"

"Else what?" looking round with an air of grave inquiry.

"I shall treat you as stiffly as I mean to do everyone else."

"Then it was nonsense—the most egregious stuff that ever was. I only said it to make you laugh," he asseverated earnestly.

"Of course, I know you did," with some dignity.

"Then, after all, I am to have the other side of the page?" with a gleam of amusement in his eyes.

"I never said so, but I shall still call you Hugh."

"Thanks, I never mean to be a day older. Hallo, I wonder what's up." They were walking up the short hill which led to the station, as he spoke, and his exclamation was caused by the sight of George, the Wentworth's groom, holding Acorn and his own horse, whilst there was another groom, whom he did not recognise, in charge of two other horses.

"How tiresome! I would much rather walk home quietly with you!"

"So you shall, Major Lushington inside?" he asked the groom as he passed.

"Yes, sir!" touching his hat, "in the telegraph-office with Lord Windsor."

"All right, they won't see us. We can get the *Globe* and wait on the platform till the coast is clear." They walked quickly through the station, which was unusually full of people, all talking together in groups, and reached the platform. Hugh went up to the book-stall to ask for the paper, and Sibel remained a few steps behind, as there were several men in front of it. Not wishing to be noticed she turned her face to the wall intending to study an advertisement, but found herself opposite the open window of the telegraph-office, inside which were two gentlemen whom she instantly recognised.

She drew back hastily lest they should see her, but her retreat was cut off by a large basket of primroses, which had been gathered from the neighbouring fields, and were destined for the London streets. She was looking at the primroses, and fancying what a pitiful change it would be for them from their peaceful birthplace amongst the dewy grass to the dust and dirt of the streets, when she heard Lord Windsor's voice say: "Well, wire him by all means, but the last person she wants is her husband."

"Don't care!" said the Major, shortly, "he must come, no other man will do."

"Why not yourself?"

"I—I—couldn't do it," as if staggered by the question.

"Not my affair, but when the poor thing's dying!" with an evident shrug of his shoulders.

"I can't help it. I wouldn't have it known for the world!"

"Deuced awkward! Everard was on the spot, you see."

"What the deuce has that to do with it?" in a tone of the greatest exasperation.

"Only he heard the scream. 'Harold' should have been Jack or Tom if you mean to be up to larks!"

"Look here, Windsor," dropping his voice to a whisper.

Sibel stood rooted to the spot for a minute, then waking to the consciousness that she was hearing something which was certainly not intended for her ears, started forward, nearly tumbling over the basket. Just then Hugh came up with the *Globe* in his hand.

"No news from India; but something awful happened this afternoon. A lady was thrown from her horse and nearly done for!"

"Who was it?" curiosity running in front of sympathy.

"A stranger. You won't know her name. It's very horrible!" shuddering as he thought of the ghastly details he had just been told.

"Won't she get better?" in an awestruck whisper.

"Not a chance of it; they say. Let's get away from all these people," and he led her past the little knots of hunting men to a quiet end of the platform.

Captain Everard raised his hat, and looked after Sibel with a meditative gaze, then turned to a brother officer.

"Poor Laura Delamere was his first, and they say that's his last!"

"She's a thousand times too good for any of them," said Major Belfield, with his cigar in his mouth; "but from what I saw last night, I'll back Windsor."

"The Masher was only making the running, whilst t'other man got to the post. By Jove, there they go!" as he caught sight of Lord Windsor and Major Lushington riding down the hill. "What'll you bet that he doesn't go to Crawshaw's Farm before-night?"

"Anything, if the other little girl's at the Chestnuts."

"But he ought, you know."

"But he won't, you know. Come and have a B. and B."

They strolled off to the refreshment-bar, whilst Hugh and Sibel went through a little white gate and down a narrow path which took them into the high-road. Those whom they wished to avoid were out of sight by this time, so they walked at a brisk pace, remembering Lord Wentworth's anxiety for the paper. Sibel was very thoughtful and said but little, her thoughts continually running on the conversation she had overheard.

What was the connection between Major Lushington and this unfortunate lady, that even Lord Windsor told him it was his duty to go to her? What could it be? She wondered if Hugh knew anything about it.

"What was her name?" she asked presently, as they turned into the gates of the Chestnuts.

"Mrs. Springfield! But some of the men who seemed to know all about her spoke of her as Laura—I forgot the other name."

"And was she quite alone?"

"She put up at the Bull Inn, with her horses and grooms. Her husband wasn't with her, I know that, and she only came down for the last meet of the season."

"But why did she want to hunt with our pack?"

"Some special attraction, somebody said, but I daresay it was all gossip," he added, hastily. "It seems such an awful shame to rake up old stories against a woman on her death-bed."

"I suppose she has a doctor and everything she wants?"

"Yes, Captain Everard galloped off for Seymour, and since then they telegraphed for Sir William Bell, but I believe it's a regular snash-up, and nothing can be done. Horrible! isn't it?" with another shudder, "and they say she was beautiful."

Major Lushington was standing on the steps with a *Globe* under his arm, as he drew off his riding-gloves.

"I see you have got it. I made a point of going round by the station because I knew Lord Wentworth would be glad to have it. How are you?" taking Sibel's hand, and looking eagerly into her face. "None the worse for last night? I don't think you look up to much."

"I have been dreadfully shocked."

"Yes, horrible, wasn't it? Don't let us talk about it. I'm so thankful you weren't there."

"Yes," said Hugh, slowly, "I think you ought to be."

The Major gave him a sharp glance over the top of Sibel's fur torque.

"I am, because it was a ghastly sight, and enough to try the nerves of any man. A woman must have fainted. And then we should have had two on our hands instead of one."

"Did you help to carry her?" said Sibel, in a low voice, as she went into the library.

Major Lushington stooped to pick up one of his gloves before he answered,—

"Yes, with several others, it seemed inhuman not to offer."

"Why shouldn't you?" raising her serious eyes to his.

He did not meet them, but looked straight into the fire.

"I'm not a good hand at that sort of thing,

and I would rather face a battle field than a woman in pain."

Sibel looked round the room to see if they were alone. Finding that Hugh had gone upstairs with the paper, she said quietly,—

"You know her, I think?"

He started violently.

"Macdonald has put you up to this!" he said, fiercely.

"He has not said a word about it," drawing herself up with youthful dignity. "Only I happened to be at the station this afternoon, when you were telegraphing to her husband."

"A stranger might do that; but I did know her, as a matter of fact—years ago—and very slightly," frowning hard, as if the recollection were intensely painful. There was a long pause. His thoughts were dark and gloomy enough to guess by his face, and it was some time before he spoke.

"I have to leave you to-morrow by the first train—awful shame—I'm dreadfully cut up about it."

"I thought you had a fortnight's leave?" looking up at him in surprise.

"I hoped so," he said, looking rather confused; "but, you see, a lot of fellows all wanted to go home at the same time."

CHAPTER XXIV.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

Nobody seemed intensely grieved when Major Lushington announced his approaching departure. Lord Wentworth politely regretted it; Hugh seemed astonished at it; and Sibel appeared to hear up wonderfully under the shock. She noticed at dinner that the artilleryman's face was unusually pale, and his hand shook as he raised his glass of claret to his lips, as if he were thoroughly unbalanced by the events of the day. During the evening she could not complain of his neglect, but a subtle change came over his manner. He was polite and attentive, anxious to place a footstool, hand her cup of tea, or turn over the leaves of her music; but all was done with an utter absence of tenderness or sentiment, as if some other memory had risen up suddenly between them, and he was still under the spell of some old association. When they parted for the night he promised to come back as soon as he could, and begged for constant letters; but as he omitted to suggest that she should come down at half-past seven to make his tea, she failed to see that it was her duty to do so. When seven struck she was wide-awake, listening to every sound, and thinking of that other morning, when she got up in haste and repented at leisure.

There was no contrition in her heart, but a sense of boundless relief, when she tripped down the stairs at half-past nine, and found nobody but Hugh in the breakfast-room to greet her.

"When the cat's away the mice may play," he said, with a smile, as he threw a spray of stephanotis on to her plate.

"Do you suppose the cat would object?" taking up the white blossoms and fastening them in the front of her dress. "I have always heard that they are very indulgent to the mice until the final poncée."

"Yes, on the same principle as the convict's last breakfast. Nothing in the papers!" seeing that her eyes were fixed on the *Morning Post*.

"It was only a false alarm."

"Then there will be no fighting?" waiting with her hand on the coffee-pot.

"Not for months—perhaps, not for years."

"Rather a good thing, isn't it?" with a deep sigh of relief.

"Yes, for my uncle," with a slight frown, for he hated to see her too much interested even in Dudley Wentworth.

"Have you heard anything of that poor Mrs. Springfield?"

"Only what George could tell me—and that wasn't much," he added, hastily, as he did not choose to inform her that Major Lushington had been riding with the unfortunate lady only

five minutes before—that they parted in anger—"had sharp words," as the groom expressed it, and she put her horse at the ditch in a reckless manner much as if she did not care whether she came to grief or not. Then came the crash, and she went down, and her horse over her. There was one scream—some said it was a gentleman's name; but when they ran to pick her up, she was quite still and seemed to know nothing. Her yellow hair was wet with blood from a cut on her forehead, and her right arm was doubled under her. "It was a sight to bring the water to any man's eyes," said George. "As to the Major, he shook like a leaf, as he tried to raise her up, and I didn't blame him neither."

"Crawshaw's Farm isn't very far off?"

"Not beyond an easy ride—about two miles from Craybridge Station."

"Don't you think it would be kind to go over there, and ask if the poor thing has everything she wants?"

Hugh looked doubtful, as he passed the toast. "She is sure to be well taken care of."

"I don't think so," regarding him with some surprise. "She seems to have no belongings, and even Major Lushington, who knew her a long while ago, has gone up to town without thinking of her."

"Did he tell you so?"

"Yes, but it was very slightly, and of course he hadn't time to do anything for her. Do ask uncle if we may have Acorn and May Queen at half past eleven."

"Acorn had a long day yesterday."

"Then you could have the cob. I never knew you make a difficulty before."

He looked at her with his winning smile.

"Of course if you wish to go, you shall."

"I do wish to go. Fancy what I should feel if I were very ill at a strange farmhouse, and no one would come to me!" her eyes filling with tears in her vivid sympathy.

"You would never be alone, that I can promise," said Hugh, in his deep voice, which seemed to give double force to his words. "I will run up and tell my uncle."

Lord Wentworth, who had been thinking much of the unfortunate lady, entirely approved of the project, and sent a message to the effect that he placed everything belonging to him at her disposal, even going so far as to offer her a bed at the Chestnuts, if the doctor would allow her to be moved.

"But perhaps she is not the sort of person you would like to have," said Hugh, hesitatingly.

"My dear boy, this is no time to ask what she has been."

"I was only thinking of Miss Fitzgerald," the blood rushing to his face.

"The noblest ladies in Rome wash the feet of beggars at certain seasons, and receive no soil, although the feet may have trodden in every path of vice. Let us do our duty, and not ask if others are doing theirs. That is the way, my boy, to go through life. And you are the last fellow to quarrel at mercy to a woman," with a kindly smile.

"I know nothing against her, and I shall be only too glad to go—only—"

"Never mind the 'only.' Order the horses, and start in good time. I shall be down to luncheon. Did anyone get up to see the Major off?"

"Not a soul!" with an air of triumph.

"Indeed! I suppose Miss Fitzgerald overslept herself?"

"I did not hear her say so," with a slight smile.

"Oblige me by ringing the bell."

London was summoned, and Hugh departed to the stables.

It was a lovely morning for a ride, rather warmer than the day before, and the air seemed to have the real breath of spring in its laughing lips as it played round the budding thorns.

"Do you know, Hugh, I must be the most heartless person alive!" and Sibel looked round at him as he rode by her side. "We are going to ask after a person who is dying,



["I WONDER LUSHINGTON HAS NOT COME BACK," SAID HUGH, LOOKING OVER THE HEDGE AT A COUPLE OF HORSEMEN.]

and yet I absolutely can't feel in low spirits. The sun is so bright, the air so delicious, and May-Queen is such a darling," patting her glossy neck, "that I feel inclined to raise up my voice and shout."

"Uncle felt the same, I believe," said Hugh, whose penetration had discovered the real secret of her exultation. "You should have seen his face when I read out that negotiations had been resumed, and the chances of war had lessened."

"His only son!" in a low voice, as her heart seemed to quiver with the thought of what his danger would mean to the poor old man, who had no other joy in life.

"And I was an only son too—but there is nobody to lie awake thinking of me when I am away from home."

"How do you know? A sleepless night is not the pleasantest thing to wish a friend, but I'll try to keep my eyes open for half-an-hour some night to oblige you. Is that the Crawhays over there?" pointing with the handle of her whip to a group of red chimneys peeping between the tops of the trees, at the foot of a grassy hill.

"Yes, and the accident happened down by the ditch," nodding towards a ploughed field on the right-hand side of the road. "It was a long way to carry her on a hurdle, but the poor thing knew nothing about it, for she was in a dead faint."

Sibel shuddered, and remained silent and grave for the rest of the way, picturing the scene just as it must have happened only the day before—the hounds in full cry tearing over the soft brown earth, the huntsman, whip, and a few of the first flight close on their heels, the stragglers coming up one after the other, in the midst of them a girl with the sun shining on her yellow hair, that nasty ditch with the hedge beyond, several got over all right and galloped away; but one was down amongst the briars, with her horse crushing the life out of her frail body!

She fancied how some pulled up their horses and came to see, grumbling perhaps at losing the run, till they found that here was something more than a woman in a fainting fit, and ruddy faces grew white, as they saw the pretty yellow hair red with blood. The horse had to be got away before they could touch her; and she fancied how it would plunge and kick, in wild unreasoning terror, with its murderous hoofs coming dangerously near to that small golden head on the trampled grass.

The picture came so vividly before her, that she saw nothing else, and was surprised to find that they had entered the gate, and were within a hundred yards of the farm.

It was a redbrick building, with gabled windows on either side of the front door, and a roof half covered with the large-leaved ivy.

A window on the second floor, just above their heads, was open, and the blind, which was drawn down to its utmost extent, flapped with an irritating noise against a box of orocucos on the sill. Outside there was the glory of the sunshine, the budding life of fruit and flower, the song of the birds, the buzzing of insects actively searching for the honey of the freshly-opened petals. Inside there was the dimness of a darkened room, the hush of coming death, as earthly passions ceased their strife, and earthly longings were crushed by that knell of despair—too late!

A fly was at the door; it moved away as the horses came in sight, and waited at a little distance.

"I should think the doctor was here. Shall I get down and reconnoitre?"

Sibel nodded, feeling so strangely moved that she could not speak. George came forward to hold Acorn, and Hugh went up the steps and listened, not liking to use the knocker. The door was opened, and as he stood on the mat the stairs were straight in front of him. Someone was coming down, but the hall seemed so dark after the brightness of

the sunshine that he could not see clearly who it was.

The man picked up his hat from the stand in the hall, pulled it down over his eyes, and looked up.

Hugh wished himself anywhere at the moment, as he saw Major Lushington standing before him, his face haggard and white as death, his eyes full of tears. He looked over the boy's shoulder to the girl's face beyond.

"You needn't have come to spy on me!" he said, hoarsely, as he leant his back against the doorpost.

(To be continued.)

ART.—The exclusive study of art will not make the best artist; the sole devotion of a lifetime to business will not make the best merchant; the acquirement of technical skill alone will not make the best mechanic. Knowledge of other things, mental drill in other branches, breadth of view, and power of sympathy will all tell upon the specific work in hand and raise it to a higher level than that of any mere specialist.

CAREFULNESS.—Negligent handiwork paves the way for listless brainwork. Most of the slipshod, uncertain calculations made by clerks and others which require continual checking and correcting and involve loss of time, temper, and money, are due to the equally slipshod habits of using their eyes and hands into which they have drifted. Every employment, even those demanding literary, scientific, and artistic abilities, is thronged with inefficient labourers who have never learned to do any one thing thoroughly and well. Had their eyes and hands been trained in childhood to some definite occupation, had they been taught accuracy, neatness, despatch in any one of the numerous branches of manual work, it is more than probable the habits thus engendered would have rescued them from the sad fate of being profitless bunglers in other departments of life.



[A MISERABLE MISUNDERSTANDING.]

NOVELETTE.]

SIR JASPER'S WOOING

CHAPTER I.

"It's just the impudentist [move as I ever heard tell on, Sir Jasper, and if you take my advice you'll write and tell them two ladies, which Mr. Hammond was kind enough to quarter on to you before he died, that Deane Court is not meant for the likes of them to live at. Females, indeed! We've done without 'em all these years, and it ain't likely that we mean to be pestered with 'em now. Why, they'd upset all our nice, orderly ways, and turn the place topsy-turvy before they'd been here a couple of days."

The speaker was Jonathan Crabtree, a tall, thin, wiry man of sixty, whose wrinkled countenance wore an expression strongly suggestive of vinegar and sour lemons, as he addressed the above-mentioned remark to his master, Sir Jasper Deane, with all the freedom of speech allowed to an old and faithful servant.

"I am afraid they must come, Jonathan," said the Baronet, ruefully, as he perused for the second time some portions of the letter which he had just been reading to his butler. "Mr. Hammond was my oldest friend, and although his request takes a somewhat unreasonable and unwelcome form, I cannot refuse to shelter his relatives, since they are really quite penniless."

Jonathan groaned audibly.

"Sir Jasper, don't, pray don't have 'em here," he exclaimed, earnestly. "They'd be the death of us both, I'm sure they would. Why not allow 'em so much a year on condition that they never come nigh Deane Court? You're too rich to miss the money, and them ladies would never be able to worrit and bother you then."

"Your plan might have been adopted, Jonathan," replied the Baronet, "had not Mr. Hammond particularly requested me to become his daughter's guardian, in order to prevent any intercourse taking place between her and her only brother, a dissipated young scamp, who has inherited all his poor father's failings, and a great many vices that he was free from into the bargain. She is very fond of him, it appears, and she would make any sacrifice to keep him supplied with the money of which he is in constant need. For this reason her father wished me, after his death, to have her here under my personal care and supervision. I cannot find it in my heart to refuse; and, of course, if Miss Hammond comes, her aunt must come with her. I regret the approaching change in our domestic arrangements very much, Jonathan, but, at the same time, it will really have to be made."

"It's enough to make a man use bad language, it is indeed," said Jonathan, angrily. His knowledge of the fair sex as represented by his late wife had not tended to prejudice him in their favour. He was in the habit of alluding to his defunct better-half somewhat ungallantly as "a perfect limb of a woman," from whose society death had brought him a welcome release. He positively hated women, and the idea of a feminine invasion taking place at Deane Court filled him with mingled anger and dread.

"Well, Jonathan, it will not be pleasant for either of us to have them here, since we are not fond of female society," said Sir Jasper, kindly; "but for my old friend's sake we must make his daughter and maiden sister welcome. He was almost penniless when he died, and I expect his want of means first made him think of leaving them as a legacy to me."

"Mr. Hammond might have 'anded his legacy over to the nearest parish, instead of leaving it to a gentleman as is known to be a confirmed mis-what's-her-name," growled the

flinty-hearted Jonathan. "I call it a adding of insult to injury myself."

"He could scarcely have done that," remarked the Baronet, with a smile. "I shall write to these ladies and tell them to come to Deane Court as soon as they like; meanwhile, I shall expect you, Jonathan, to engage some women servants to be here in readiness against their arrival. The vicar's wife will, I daresay, be able to assist you in this matter. Let them be respectable; and see that all necessary arrangements are carried out. I do not wish to discuss the subject any further at present."

"Very well, Sir Jasper," replied Jonathan, with an air of calm resignation to the inevitable. "I daresay the women folk will turn out to be a nice lot, thinking of nothing but new bonnets and sweethearts, and I shall always have to be dancing after them to keep them in anything like order. But if you can only manage to look after the ladies upstairs, I'll warrant to do as much for the females down below. They'll have to be sharp hands indeed to get round the blind side of Jonathan Crabtree."

Sir Jasper Deane, the owner of Deane Court, was a misogynist. If he did not really hate women he feared and suspected them all. It was the study of his life to avoid coming in contact with them, and the sight of an approaching bonnet was sufficient to make the baronet beat a speedy retreat into the safe shelter of his own grounds.

An unfortunate love affair in early life had been the means of giving this peculiar bent to his disposition.

The girl upon whom he had lavished all the wealth of his affection jilted him at the last moment in the most heartless manner, by making a runaway match with a young officer. Her conduct had inspired him with a deeply-rooted distrust for her sex, that he had never been able to overcome. His household consisted entirely of men, and the majority of his

visitors were, like himself, bachelors, since his antipathy towards women was a well-known fact throughout the county.

Judge, then, of his horrified surprise when a letter from a friend, now dead, was placed in his hand, imploring him to undertake the guardianship of the writer's only daughter, and also to provide a home for his maiden sister, whose delicate health prevented her from earning her own living!

Walter Hammond, the friend in question, had been a second Harold Skimpole, so far as an airy disregard respecting his own liabilities, and a decided talent for spurning upon his friends in the pleasantest way possible, were concerned. He knew perfectly well when he wrote his pathetic epistle that Sir Jasper, receiving it after his death, would not lightly disregard the request it contained, while, at the same time, refusal or remonstrance with the writer himself would be impossible.

The baronet's letter of invitation sped upon its way, and met with a gratefully-wounded answer from the two helpless women who had been thus left in his care.

Meanwhile, preparations for their arrival went on at Deane Court under the austere direction of Jonathan Crabtree. Servants were engaged, and rooms were rearranged and tastefully fitted up for their new occupants. On the day when they were expected, wood fires glowed on the wide, old-fashioned hearthstones; while hothouse flowers, books, statuettes, a grand piano, and various other luxuries proved that Sir Jasper really wished to surround his guests with all possible comforts, and, at least, to give them the idea that they were welcome.

When the carriage that had been sent to meet them drove up to the principal entrance, over the crisp, snow-covered ground, the baronet experienced a feeling of intense nervousness and embarrassment. Seldom or ever before had he been called upon to play the host to lady visitors. But with the hospitality of a true gentleman he came forward to welcome them to Deane Court as they entered the wide, gothic hall, where genial warmth and a flood of soft light offered such a pleasant contrast to the bleak world outside.

Miss Hammond, the dead man's sister, raised her heavy crape veil, as Sir Jasper released the cold little hand she had extended to him in greeting. The refined, colourless beauty of the face thus exposed to view astonished him considerably. He had thought of her as an elderly woman, with grey hair, and perhaps spectacles into the bargain. In reality she was but little over thirty; a tall, slender, queenly woman, with a sweet, pale face, finely-cut features, deep, tender grey eyes, and soft, bronze-brown hair, knotted low down on a shapely, swan-like neck.

Sir Jasper acknowledged to himself, as he regarded her, that never before had a face at once so intellectual and pleasing come under his notice.

The surprise was mutual, since Miss Hammond was hardly prepared for the tall, handsome man with the commanding presence and reserved, but kindly and gracious manner, now in the act of removing her fur cloak from her shoulders.

In spite of his forty years, Sir Jasper showed no signs of advancing age, save a slight thinning of the dark hair over his broad, white forehead, which betokened him to possess the nobility of intellect as well as the mere social status conferred by a long pedigree and a time-honoured name. She had not expected to find the woman-hater half so good-looking.

"This is my niece, Mabel, Sir Jasper," said Miss Hammond, drawing the baronet's attention as she spoke to the slim girl standing behind her. "You see we have taken you at your word, and came at once. The amount of anxiety your kind, generous letter relieved us from I can hardly describe. I hope you will not permit us in any way to interfere with your usual arrangements. We may be able to help ourselves a little later on, but at

present our loss is very recent, and Mabel, poor child, feels it keenly."

"The kindness is all on the other side, my dear Miss Hammond," said Sir Jasper, hurriedly, telling a fib in his confusion. "Your presence here will make my lonely house quite cheerful, and remember that Deane Court is your home for the future. Why, my child, you look quite pinched with the cold!" he continued, compassionately, as he turned towards Mabel Hammond, whose large dark eyes had suddenly grown moist with tears at her aunt's brief allusion to the dead. "You will be glad to go to your room at once and get thoroughly warm before you dress for dinner. The maids shall bring you up some tea and help you with the unpacking."

"You are very kind," Mabel murmured, gratefully.

Sir Jasper looking more intently at her saw that his new ward, although a mere girl at present, promised one day to become a lovely woman. The low, broad brow, with its dark, clustering curls, the delicate Greek nose, the large, mournful dark eyes, the softly-tinted oval cheeks, were full of artistic beauty, and only required time in order to reach their perfect development. As Sir Jasper watched the aunt and niece go up the wide, oaken staircase he felt that he had indeed accepted an onerous responsibility in consenting to become the latter's guardian.

It seemed strange, indeed, to the baronet to dine with two graceful, cultivated women, instead of sitting down to his usual solitary meal.

His shyness quickly wore off, since the absence of any awkward embarrassment on their part helped in a great measure to set him at ease.

When he rejoined them in the drawing-room after dinner the idea of being compelled to pass a portion of his time in their society every day seemed to have lost half its terrors for him.

"What beautiful rooms you have given us, Sir Jasper!" Mabel remarked, gratefully, as he seated himself beside her; "and you have filled them with so many lovely things. Auntie and I never looked forward to such a reception. How are we to thank you for all your kindness to us?"

"I want no thanks," Sir Jasper replied, with a smile. "To see you become happier by degrees as your loss grows less poignant will be my best reward. I have but one condition to impose upon you, Mabel, and that is not of my own framing. Your father wished me to acquaint you with it, and I cannot help thinking that it is a very wise and judicious one."

"What may it consist of?" she inquired, earnestly. "Poor papa laid so few restrictions upon me during his lifetime, and now that I have lost him, any wish of his must seem to me like a sacred command."

"You are to promise me that you will not hold any communication with your brother Alfred," continued the baronet, gently. "You will give me your word of honour not to write to him, to meet him, or to offer him any pecuniary assistance, since he has proved himself to be unworthy of your sisterly love and affection. Your father, and my oldest friend, implored me to enforce this condition upon you for your own good, and I am not a free agent in the matter. Mabel, will you make the required promise, and thus fulfil the dying request of a parent?"

"Since you put it to me in such a manner, I must," she said, sadly. "I cannot lightly disobey my father's earnest wish, and yet I am so sorry for poor Alfred. I know that he has been very wild, but he is my only brother, and if I refuse to help him he may go from bad to worse. However, I have given you my word, Sir Jasper, and I will endeavour to keep the promise just made unbroken."

"That is quite sufficient," said the baronet, and then with ready tact he led the conversation into a less painful channel.

On descending to the breakfast-room, a few mornings later on, Sir Jasper was confronted by Jonathan Crabtree, who handed him a telegram, with as tragic an air as if it had been a death-warrant.

"I believe it is from Master Jack," he said, briefly, "just to let us know that he's coming down to Deane Court, Sir Jasper."

The telegram which Sir Jasper had opened by this time ran as follows:—

"DEAR UNCLE,—I am about to quarter myself upon you for a month. Shall arrive by train due at 12.15. Let the dog-cart meet me at station. "JACK DALMAHOY."

"I know what will happen next, Sir Jasper," said the old butler, solemnly, on hearing the contents of the telegram. "Master Jack will come down here and fall head-over-ears in love with the youngest of them two ladies. He's just the age for it, and a nice state of things we shall have to look forward to then."

"Oh, nonsense, Jonathan," replied the baronet, rather dubiously. "My nephew is not so susceptible as you imagine him to be, and Miss Mabel is far too sad at present to entertain any foolish thoughts about love and marriage. You always prophesy evil."

"I hope that I may turn out to be a false prophet," said Jonathan, grimly; "but I've my doubts about it. They say that love is like the measles—the older you are when you take the complaint the more you have to suffer. Master Jack, being young, may get off with only a slight attack."

CHAPTER II.

JACK DALMAHOY, who came by the 12.15 train as previously announced, and drove up the avenue at a spanking pace in his uncle's dog-cart, was a broad-shouldered, handsome young giant, with dark brown eyes, closely-cropped hair, and a moustache that was the envy of all the other medical students at St. Thomas's Hospital.

The only son of his favourite sister, long since dead, Sir Jasper had always been kind to Jack, tipping him in the most liberal manner when at Eton, and providing him with the means to pursue his studies when he grew to man's estate, and expressed a wish to adopt the medical profession.

Jack looked upon Deane Court as his home, and a warm welcome always awaited him there whenever he chose to spend a few weeks with his studious bachelor uncle.

The young fellow was undeniably clever—sure to make his way in the profession he had chosen—while in addition to this natural advantage he would, in all probability, be Sir Jasper's heir, since the baronet entertained not the faintest idea of getting married for the sake of being able to hand the estate down to one of his own children.

Sir Jasper had acquainted Jack with the purport of Mr. Hammond's letter, and the addition to his household that must in consequence of the dead man's request shortly take place.

Intensely amused at the idea that his shy, woman-fearing uncle being compelled to entertain such unusual guests as a brace of ladies, Jack had seized the earliest opportunity for leaving town in order to view for himself the changed state of affairs at Deane Court.

His arrival was hailed with joy, for Jack was a favourite with the entire household, even Jonathan Crabtree consenting to relax a little sometimes, and to laugh at the young medical student's jokes, when they were not played off upon his own dignified person.

Jack Dalmahey was on excellent terms with Miss Hammond before he had been at Deane Court many hours. She possessed one of those sympathetic and, withal, quietly humorous natures that universally attract a young man's fancy, even when the women who own them happen to have lost their *premiere jeunesse*. She listened to his account of hospital life with real interest, and, delighted

with her evident sympathy and attention, the lava flood of Jack's eloquence flowed on freely.

He was deep in the details of a practical joke, designed and carried out by himself and his brother "sawbones," when Mabel, who had but just left her room owing to a severe cold, came down to join the trio in the drawing-room.

Her great beauty, and the sorrow that seemed to weigh her down like a lovely flower bruised and beaten by heavy rains, appealed to all that was highest and best in Jack Dalmahoy's careless, mirth-loving nature. Jack, in spite of his go-ahead ways, was yet capable of evincing tenderness and delicate sympathy for anyone really in distress, more especially when the object of sympathy happened, as in the present case, to be a very pretty girl.

By degrees, as he became better acquainted with her—and for an individual never before found wanting in self-assurance, Jack proved to be most unusually diffident when in Mabel's society—he did his best to rouse her from the lethargy of grief that had completely overwhelmed her for the time being.

He persuaded her to accompany him in long walks to view the principal beauties of the neighbourhood, for Deane Court was situated in one of the loveliest parts of Surrey. He read to her in his clear, strong, musical voice, and gave out that he was a second Sims Reeves, that she might be induced to play his accompaniments.

Little by little the hope and happiness almost inseparable from youth came back to Mabel again. Her lips more frequently curved into a smile, her eyes no longer shone with an expression of pathetic sadness, and Sir Jasper felt almost grateful to his nephew for the beneficial change that young men had been the means of producing in his ward.

Jack's pleasant self-invited stay came to an end all too quickly. He went back to town in a savage mood, with the conviction that he was a much-to-be-pitied mortal strung upon him. He would have felt happier, perhaps, had he but known how much Mabel missed him, and how dull the Court seemed to her now that he was absent from it.

Sometimes inclined to be pensive, and thoughtful herself, merry, rattling, go-ahead Jack, every inch a gentleman in spite of his many escapades, pleased and interested her through their force of contrast. She detected herself in the act of longing for his return, while the rich colour flew to her fair face in a self-betraying manner whenever his name happened to be mentioned by her aunt or Sir Jasper in the course of conversation. The baronet was by this time becoming pretty well accustomed to the new order of things at Deane Court.

Mabel and her aunt were well-bred, unobtrusive women, with plenty of graceful tact, and almost as if by instinct they refrained from interfering with any of his nasal habits. He was free and unfettered as of old, only with the pleasant addition of congenial feminine society whenever he cared to avail himself of it, and for a woman-hater he certainly contrived to enjoy it very frequently.

Mabel's sweet young presence seemed to impart life and freshness to the gray old mansion. Sir Jasper petted and indulged her in every possible way; at the same time it was to Miss Hammond, the dead man's sister, that he began almost unconsciously to turn for advice and assistance, both in his studies and his business affairs, and in whose society he experienced an ever-increasing delight.

After the long years of solitude he had endured, it seemed both helpful and cheering to Sir Jasper to be able to unfold his plans, and air his pet theories in the presence of a clever sympathetic woman who was capable of understanding both, and who could sometimes give him valuable hints of her own into the bargain.

Miss Hammond frequently wrote his letters, arranged his books, and copied pages of blotted manuscript for him in a neat, legible hand,

besides transacting many of the minor business details connected with the estate. The baronet began to wonder how he had ever managed to get on without her, although the distrust he had so long entertained towards all women prevented him from bestowing the entire confidence, the absolute trust, that she really merited upon her.

"Well, Jonathan, I don't think that so far we have much to regret with regard to our increased household!" he remarked one day, after paying a visit to the wine-cellar at that ancient worthy's request. "Miss Hammond and her niece are, you must admit, very nice ladies, and they have altered few, if any, of our old-fashioned habits."

"If you've no cause to complain, Sir Jasper, it ain't for the likes of me to say anything!" replied Jonathan, with an air of mournful humility. "I've lived in your service nigh thirty years, and I'm willing to die in it, notwithstanding that my life is rendered a burden to me through the goings on of the female portion of the domestics."

"Why, what is the matter?" inquired Sir Jasper, kindly. "I don't see much of them, it is true; but the woman-servants seem to me, if anything, to be above the average. I suppose you had a good character with each of them, Jonathan?"

"It's sweethearts, that's what is really the matter, Sir Jasper," said Jonathan, tartly. "They've each got at least one, and it's as much as I can do to prevent you from being eaten out of 'ouse and 'ome by a lot of followers as ought never to be allowed to come within a mile of the place. Yesterday I found the village policeman at all people's prowling round the kitchen entrance, and I sent him off in double quick time. You may have met him, Sir Jasper, for you were coming up the avenue as he went down!"

"I remember meeting the policeman!" replied the baronet, with a smile, "and I fancied that he looked rather sheepish."

"No wonder!" said Jonathan, indignantly. "When he was carrying away the best part of a leg of mutton with him. You don't know, Sir Jasper, what I have to go through every day with them females; you don't, indeed."

Sir Jasper's hearty laugh, and his inability to take a serious view of the matter, rendered his attempt at consolation very unsatisfactory to Jonathan. The old butler found himself in a decided minority, for both Sir Jasper and Jack Dalmahoy had, as it were, gone over to the enemy, and left him quite alone.

It was surprising to remark how frequently Jack contrived to spend a few days at Deane Court now that Sir Jasper was not its only occupant. His ordinary studies were as often as possible laid on one side to admit of his attention being concentrated upon a new object of interest that savoured, if the truth must be told, more of love than medicine.

The baronet did not fail to notice the frequency of his nephew's visits. He deemed it but natural, however, that young people should like to be together, while the feeling that existed between them might, after all, contain no deeper elements than mutual friendship, and similarity of taste or opinion.

So Jack came and went at will, devoting himself chiefly to Mabel during those flying visits to which unknown to him, she looked forward so eagerly. So the first time in his life Jack Dalmahoy, the hero of many flirtations, was really in love, and Cupid reigned supreme, where Sir Jasper fondly hoped that platonic affection alone existed.

"Have you enjoyed your ride?" he inquired, as he helped Mabel to dismount from the bay mare that Sir Jasper had placed at her disposal.

"Yes, very much," she replied laughingly, stroking the bay's sleek glossy neck the while, "although you compelled me to gallop nearly the whole way at a break-neck pace that would have horrified Auntie or Sir Jasper had they met us."

"I don't know of a more delightful sensation than that caused by a brisk gallop on a

clear, bright morning," said Jack, undauntedly. "It has brought the roses to your cheeks, at any rate, and rendered you a little more distractingly lovely than usual."

"A poet and a medical student combined!" retorted Mabel, with an air of demure mischief. "What shall we hear of next, I wonder? I thought your profession was far too prosaic to permit of your making such flowery sentences, Mr. Dalmahoy!"

"I think it is a great deal too bad of you to laugh at me in this manner, and to nip my poetic genius in the bud," said Jack, indignantly. "You are worse than the *Quarterly Review*. In return for the snubbing I have just received at your hands I shall expect you to walk across the park with me, and pay a visit to the interesting patient I prescribed for yesterday, Farmer Mullin's old cow. He was kind enough to say that I might do as well as the 'vet,' whose absence procured for me the distinguished patronage in question. I should like just to know how the 'case' is going on."

"Let us go, by all means," said Mabel, gravely, gathering up the ample folds of her riding-habit in her small dog-skin gloved hand. "An important patient is a great advantage for a young beginner. I only hope that she has suffered no relapse since yesterday."

Side by side they crossed the park, and Jack Dalmahoy, anxious to make the best of such a good opportunity, determined to put his fate boldly to the test, since his love for Mabel had reached a stage that hardly admitted of further concealment or delay.

"I suppose our pleasant walks and rides are numbered now," he remarked, rather sadly. "I, at least, shall regret them more than a little."

"Why should they be numbered?" she inquired quietly. "You surely do not think of leaving England?"

"Certainly not," replied Jack. "What I mean is, that Sir Jasper will soon invite some of the county people to meet you and Miss Hammond. In return you will have to accept their invitation, and you will soon be lost sight of in a whirl of engagements, while I shall be nowhere."

"Poor fellow!" said Mabel, with a smile; "you are greatly to be pitied. Allow me to inform you, however, that I do not care much for society; and that pampered girls are not, as a rule, much in request among county people."

"Mabel," he continued earnestly, imprisoning her disengaged hand in his own as he spoke, "do you care enough for me to wait until I have carved out a fortune for us both, and so won the right to ask you to become my darling wife? Remember, I beseech you, that the happiness of my whole life depends upon your answer."

"I cannot think of such things yet," she replied, with dropping eyes and saddened tone. "You don't know how dear my father was to me, Jack; although other people blamed and found fault with him. The memory of my loss is still too fresh for me to carry it beneath other interests, no matter how close and dear they may be."

"At least you will give me some word of encouragement," pleaded Jack; "and then I will say no more for the present. It is a very trying thing, Mabel dearest, when you ought to be tracing various complaints to their respective sources to find that you are unable to get beyond the anatomy of your own heart! Won't you give me just a little hope to go on with?"

"Well, if it takes you twenty years to make that fortune you spoke of just now, I will wait for you, since I care for no one else," she said shyly, but frankly. "Does that satisfy you?"

It must have satisfied him very well indeed, for he made no protest against it; and they sealed the bargain with something that was not sealing-wax, although it made their lips adhere very closely together for a brief space of time.

The visit to Mullin's sick cow was a long

one, and yet the patient proved herself to be going on in a satisfactory manner, which rendered the length of the medical man's stay all the more unaccountable.

While smoking his cigar in the grounds that night, and thinking over the pleasant events of the day, Jack Dalmahoy caught sight of a man and woman engaged in earnest conversation beneath one of the tall trees in the avenue. While he was still at some distance from them they separated, the man going towards the lodge gates, and the woman returning swiftly in the direction of the house.

Her tall, slender form was enveloped from head to foot in a thick, dark cloak, and as she caught sight of Jack coming towards her in the starlight, she turned away from him, and ran towards the Court with the swiftness of a startled deer.

"One of the maid-servants, I suppose," he remarked to himself, as she vanished from sight among the trees; "and yet I don't remember having seen one with such a graceful, well-developed form as that among them. That fellow was her lover beyond a doubt, and she was afraid lest I should betray their interview to old Jonathan if I chanced to recognise her. I could hardly be capable of such a mean act, since I happen to be rowing in the same boat myself."

CHAPTER III.

ALTHOUGH he felt almost ashamed to acknowledge the fact even to himself, Sir Jasper Deane's opinions respecting the fair sex had undergone a complete transformation since Mabel Hammond and her aunt had taken up their residence at Deane Court.

They had unconsciously brought fresh and influential forces to bear upon his life, while a strange, deep happiness, never before experienced in such intensity, came, like an Indian summer, to gladden his hitherto sombre and loveless existence.

Little by little his old opinions wavered and grew uncertain. Then they vanished altogether, to be replaced by others far more reasonable and satisfactory in their nature.

He recognized at length the folly he had been guilty of in condemning all women because one had played him false. He even went so far as to admit that loyal, loving women were *perhaps* to be found in every class and under every condition. Sir Jasper's changed opinions had only been arrived at after a close study of one of the two ladies then residing under his roof, and for whom his first feelings of liking and admiration were quickly being transformed into absolute, positive love.

Although the baronet was quite conscious as to the existence of his newly-awakened passion for a very charming woman, he was extremely diffident about putting it into words. He possessed an unusually small share of self-confidence; and the fact that he was both wealthy and good-looking did not tend to enhance his valour in his own eyes to any great extent.

He regarded himself in the light of an uninteresting, taciturn book-worm, quite destitute of the qualities that appeal most forcibly to a woman's heart; and on that account he shrank from making a formal declaration of love to the object of his affection, lest, after all, a second disappointment should await him.

And there was yet another reason why he should hesitate before asking the woman he loved to share his life. Jack Dalmahoy, his favourite nephew, had always been taught to regard himself as heir-presumptive to Deane Court. Would it be altogether fair to the young man to blight all his expectations by taking a wife, and thus rendering the arrival of a son and heir extremely probable?

"I know what I will do," thought the sorely-perplexed Baronet, a few days after the one on which Mabel's promise had made Jack radiantly happy. "I'll take Jack into my confidence. If he doesn't perceive anything

absurd in the idea of a man of my age getting married, and if he doesn't take the subsequent loss of the estate very much to heart, I'll make the plunge, and get her to say yes or no to my proposal. Anything is better than suspense. Yes, I'll consult Jack. If he's young, he's clever and sharp-witted; and in event of my really getting married I shall not forget to compensate him well for the loss which that important change in my plans must needs involve upon him."

When Mabel and her aunt had retired to their own rooms that night, and the baronet, with Jack Dalmahoy, were safely ensconced in the smoking-room, free from all fear of interruption, the former threw the tip of his third cigar into the fire, and plunged boldly into the subject that was uppermost in his mind.

"Jack, my boy!" he began, abruptly, with a queer, conscious look upon his handsome, kindly face, "what would you say if you were actually to hear that I had renounced my unfavourable opinions about women, and that I had even gone so far as to entertain some remote idea of getting married?"

"I should say that you were getting wiser as you grew older," replied Jack, readily. "Uncle Jasper, with all due respect, I beg leave to call you a profound humbug. You have never really been a woman-hater, although you imagined yourself to be one. Your nature is too sound at the core for that, and now it is beginning to assert itself in real earnest. I drink to the health of the future Lady Deane."

"It is very good of you, Jack, to take it in this way," said Sir Jasper, gratefully. "Most men would have regarded such a suggestion on my part from a different point of view had they been brought up to regard the estate as their own property in the future. My marriage may be the means of preventing you from ever coming into possession of Deane Court."

"I am not such a mean hound as to wish you to keep single all the days of your life in order that I may step into your shoes when you are gone," replied Jack, with unaffected heartiness, while he endeavoured to stifle a slight feeling of disappointment in its birth. It would never be in his power now to make Mabel the mistress of Deane Court. But then she cared so little for rank and riches that the loss Sir Jasper's marriage would entail upon them did not appear so overwhelming to the young man after all.

"You shall never want for anything, Jack," continued the Baronet, "and when you marry I shall settle so much a year upon you and your wife. You will feel a desire to *ranger* yourself before long like other men of your age."

"One confidence deserves another," replied Jack, lighting a fresh cigar, and mixing himself another soda-and-brandy. "Perhaps I may have a little *affaire de cour* of my own to bring under your notice presently, uncle Jasper. I am now waiting to hear the name of the lady upon whom your choice has fallen."

"Well, I don't mind telling you if you'll promise to keep my communication a strict secret for the present," said the Baronet. "You see, dear boy, I am naturally rather diffident, and since I have not directly asked the lady in question to become my wife I do not wish my intended proposal to reach her by any side wind. As we happen to live under the same roof such a thing would be extremely awkward and embarrassing."

"How much longer are you going to keep me in the agonies of suspense?" inquired Jack, rather impatiently. "I want the name, and nothing but the name will satisfy me."

"I hope you won't think that I have made a decided ass of myself, Jack," said his uncle, "when I tell you that I have fallen deeply in love with Mabel Hammond."

"The deuce you have! Oh, indeed!" stammered Jack, sitting bolt upright in his chair, while a very disagreeable sensation of coming trouble oppressed his heart. "Do you

think that she is likely to accept you, uncle Jasper?"

"That is hardly a fair question," said Sir Jasper, with a smile; "but, judging from her manner towards me lately, I think I may venture to indulge the hope that my wooing will be crowned with success."

"You are hardly the sort of man to meet with a refusal from any woman in her senses," remarked Jack, with a great deal of suppressed bitterness in his voice. "A rich, good-looking bachelor need not go begging for a wife."

"I threw out a very strong hint to her yesterday concerning my intentions," continued the Baronet, in happy ignorance of his nephew's decidedly unpleasant frame of mind, "and she took it in good part; that is to say, she did not, either by word or look make any attempt to discourage or repulse me. I know that some disparity exists between us in point of age; but not enough to prevent us from coming together as man and wife, and living happily afterwards."

"He is forty, and she is eighteen!" thought Jack with a mental shudder. "Some disparity in point of age, is rather a mild way of putting it. Oh, Mabel, Mabel! how cruelly have I been deceived in you!"

But Jack was proud, and though his heart ached sorely, he only permitted himself to say,—

"Oh, you will 'worry along' together quite as comfortably as the majority of married people do, uncle Jasper, in spite of the fact that your bride happens to be somewhat younger than yourself."

"I hope we shall!" replied Sir Jasper, with an expression of quiet, intense happiness resting upon his face, as he gazed steadily into the depths of the glowing coals. "I shall weigh my fate in the balance very soon, Jack, for I am anxious to know the best or the worst that is in store for me. May Heaven grant a more prosperous ending to this, my second love affair, than the first could boast of; but whether I write myself bachelor or Benedick, Deane Court will always be your home, my boy, until you establish one of your own."

"You are very kind!" said Jack, dryly, "but I shall not make any extensive claims on your hospitality, since I think of starting for America when once I have passed my exam. My good wishes, however, will always be yours."

"I know it, Jack!" replied the Baronet. "There has always been a good understanding between us from the time when you were a small boy with a wonderful talent for getting into mischief; witness the day when you climbed the old elm-tree, with Jonathan's best wig in your hand, and left it hanging upon the topmost bough. But what were you saying just now about a love affair of your own, that you intended to acquaint me with?"

"Oh, they were but idle words!" said Jack Dalmahoy, quietly. "Love is an expensive luxury, which I cannot afford to go in for at present. What woman would dream of bestowing her hand and heart upon a poor medical student while wealthy husbands and fashionable weddings are yet within the bounds of possibility? I have outlived all such arcaidian notions."

"Don't be cynical, Jack," said his uncle, reprovingly. "You are too young to adopt that tone in earnest, and you don't belong to the *blasé*, smooth-faced idiots of tender age who make an exhibition of themselves in every ball-room, and who enjoy life just as keenly as any one else if the truth were known."

"I shall be worn-out in another sense of the word if I stay up all night talking and smoking!" replied Jack, with a poor attempt at a laugh, as he rose from his easy chair. "I hope your wooing will be attended by every success, uncle Jasper, and that your bride may prove to be all that your fancy painted her. I need hardly wish you pleasant dreams, since they are sure to come of their own accord."

Poor Jack! He did not seem to be in a hurry

to go to bed when he reached his room. He drew up the blind, letting in a flood of pure silvery moonlight, and then he sat down by the window with his pale face buried in his hands to reflect upon the unwelcome facts that had so recently been brought under his notice.

He could hardly realise as yet, that Mabel—his Mabel—had been capable of encouraging Sir Jasper's matrimonial advances, and giving, as it were, a tacit consent to them. He had placed such boundless faith in her love, and the promise she had given him only a few days before, that it was hard indeed to believe that she had already broken the latter in favour of another and a far wealthier claimant.

And yet the evidence against her was so pitilessly clear. Jack fancied that he could read the events of the last few days plainly enough.

Mabel had accepted his own offer of love in all sincerity, or, at least, with a certain amount of real pleasure. Then Sir Jasper's unexpected overtures had been made; and pleased and surprised at the idea of having such a wealthy lover at her feet, she had thrown Jack on one side with as little ceremony as she would have bestowed upon a worn-out glove. A poor nephew could weigh but little in the matrimonial scale when his rich uncle filled the other, ready to bring it down with a bang.

"I'll leave this confounded place to-morrow, and go back to town," he said to himself moodily at the end of a long, bitter reverie. "I've been hard hit by a mercenary little coquette, whom I mistook for a true loving girl. But I shall get over it in time, and, at any rate, she shall not witness my disappointment. Before I go a thorough understanding shall take place between us. I will confront her with the evidence of her own double dealing, and hear what she has to say in return. Then I'll make myself scarce at Deane Court for a long while to come, since Mabel will hardly care to encounter me again when once her deceitful conduct has been brought home to her in the plainest terms. Poor, generous-hearted uncle Jasper! He deserves a better wife than beautiful, mercenary Mabel Hammond will make him. She is sure to go down to the village on some errand or other to-morrow morning, and then I shall have an opportunity to unburden my mind, and to enjoy (!) a last conversation with my false love. To think that she, whom I imagined to be the very soul of innocence, could act so basely. It's enough to make a fellow turn woman-hater on his own account, and abandon all faith in woman for ever and a day."

CHAPTER IV.

JACK DALMAHOY'S conjecture turned out to be perfectly correct. On the next morning Mabel went by herself to the village to obtain some silks and wools that she required for crewel-work, and to visit some of the old and infirm people who received alms from the master of Deane Court.

By taking a short cut across the park he managed to intercept her just where the high road sloped gently down towards the picturesque village. She glanced shyly at him as he came towards her, while a smile of welcome lurked in her soft, dark eyes.

Was it possible, Jack asked himself bitterly, that this girl who met him without any shade of confusion or embarrassment in her manner could really entertain the idea of throwing him over in favour of a wealthy and titled suitor so soon after promising to become his wife, when once he had made enough money to provide a suitable home for her? She looked so pure, so innocent, so free from any tinge of worldliness as her dark eyes met his frankly, while her lovely face, glowing with exercise and the north wind's bracing kiss, bespoke a delight occasioned by their meeting that she did not attempt to conceal from her lover.

Was he labouring under some wretched mistake that a few explanatory words would

suffice to clear up for ever? Mabel's reply to his accusation would soon settle the uncertainty one way or another.

"Thou art so near and yet so far!" she quoted so merrily, as Jack stood for a moment steadfastly regarding her from the other side of the tall fence that divided one end of Sir Jasper's park from the high-road. "You will find a gate a little farther along, if you wish, like a second Dick Turpin, to take to the road."

But Jack, with never a smile on his face, swung himself lightly over the fence, and walked along the road by her side in perfect silence. Although he longed to put an end to the painful suspense that pervaded his whole being, he dreaded the result of the questions he was about to ask so much that he could hardly muster up sufficient courage to commence his inquisition. Certainly no Grand Inquisitor of old Spain had ever felt so terribly ill at ease when in the presence of a supposed culprit!

"How silent you are this morning!" Mabel remarked, with some surprise, as the change in his manner attracted her attention. "What is the matter, Jack? Are you pining for London air and London society already?"

"Mabel," he began, abruptly, turning round upon her with so much vehemence that she fairly started. "Are you so unfortunate as to lack both heart and conscience? I fear it must be so, or you would not venture to address me in the old familiar strain, and allow your glance to meet mine so frankly, after what has occurred. Perhaps you think that I am still unacquainted with the duplicity of which you have been guilty towards me; but in that case you are greatly mistaken. The manner in which you have seen fit to keep, or rather to break the promise made so recently, and with so much apparent fervour and sincerity, is no secret to me!"

Jack Dalmahoy's last faint hope that he had been wrongly informed regarding her faithlessness, that she might be able indignantly to refute the charge brought against her, vanished as he glanced at her face from which all the delicate bloom had fled, leaving it deadly pale; while a timid beseeching look of conscious guilt shone in her large tear-filled eyes, which, veiled by their long drooping lashes, no longer dared to meet his earnest gaze.

"Oh, Jack, don't be too hard upon me!" she said, imploringly. "You cannot tell how sorely I was tempted before I gave way, and broke the promise so earnestly made, and which, at the time, I really intended to keep. I am not trying to excuse myself; but your anger is more than I can bear."

"If you fear it so much it is strange that you should act in a way that must needs arouse it!" he replied, sternly. "You are right in not attempting to palm any excuses off upon me, since they would only serve to add contempt to the other unenviable feelings that I already entertain towards you!"

"You are very merciless!" she said, slowly, the tears coursing down her pale face as she spoke. "And yet I know that, to one so honourable as yourself, my conduct must appear wrong and unprincipled in the extreme. May I ask if you have informed Sir Jasper of my broken promise, Mr. Dalmahoy?"

"No!" said Jack, coldly, "my uncle will never learn your true character from me. The painful task of undeceiving him shall be left to yourself or others, for petty spite or retaliation finds no favour in my eyes."

"I thank you, for even this concession!" Mabel replied, humbly, but with an evident air of relief. "I do not deserve it at your hands; but I am very grateful for it, nevertheless. Perhaps, some day, I may even muster up enough courage to confess my shortcomings to Sir Jasper; but at present, for certain reasons, I dare not do so."

"I can understand that such a confession might prove detrimental to your own prospects in the immediate future!" Jack retorted, in a tone of unconcealed contempt! Why, the

heartless, mercenary girl actually permitted him to witness her delight on hearing that Sir Jasper had not been made acquainted with her deceitful, faithless conduct! The poor lover she had jilted apparently went for nothing in her sight, since the rich one she hoped to secure had not been prejudiced against her. Any display of fine feeling must, he told himself, be lost upon such a being.

"I was thinking more of his prospects than my own," she observed, with a sudden painful flush, for Jack's answer had hit the target. "A few words from you, Mr. Dalmahoy, would be sufficient to bring great trouble upon us both, and it is generous of you to maintain silence upon what must always be a very unpleasant subject."

"I think we need hardly prolong the present conversation!" he replied, while anger, wounded love, and reluctant condemnation struggled in his breast for the mastery. "Your own act has parted us for ever, and you can hardly expect me to take much interest in the future, a very glad one no doubt, to which you are looking forward. My visit to Deane Court ends to-day, since you and I could not go on meeting each other in the usual manner under such widely different circumstances. Miss Hammond, I wish you good morning, and good-bye!"

"Jack, dear Jack, how can you speak to me so cruelly?" she said, imploringly, as she placed one little trembling hand upon his sleeve to detain him. "At least say that you forgive me before you go, or I shall lose my reason. If you could only have heard the pitiful story he told me, and how persistently he pleaded before I even thought of breaking my promise. Remember what a strong claim he has upon my love. I can hardly refuse to give him the help and sympathy of which he stands in need, when he asks me for them, although I am obliged to destroy my own happiness in so doing. I feared that, when once you knew all, your anger would be great, but I did not think you would judge me quite so harshly."

"You measured my nature by your own, I suppose," Jack replied, quietly; "and thus imagined it to be somewhat shallow. You cannot deceive me by concealing your mercenary, ambitious motives under a cloak of assumed generosity and self-sacrifice. I will try to forgive your conduct, Mabel, although it has made havoc of my life; but to forget it is at present impossible. Once more, I wish you good-bye!"

Not daring to meet the pleading, sorrowful eyes raised to his own, lest his fortitude should fail him at the last moment, Jack Dalmahoy turned hastily away from Mabel, and retraced his footsteps in the direction of Deane Court.

He felt both angry and miserable as he strode along the dreary road, bordered on either side by leafless hedge-rows, his thoughts still centred upon Mabel's inexplicable behaviour, in spite of his stern resolve to banish her from his mind, and for the future to embrace nothing more personal or bewitching than hard work.

Only a day or two ago he would have staked his life upon her love and fidelity. Now, by her own confession, he knew her to be a charming little coquette, accepting the attentions of one man just to keep her hand in till another and a more eligible parti entered the lists against him. Never again would he place his damaged happiness in the hands of a woman, for her to play battledore and shuttlecock with it at will.

On reaching Deane Court Jack went straight to his own room and packed his portmanteau. Then he carefully destroyed some original verses written on perfumed tinted paper, and dedicated "To Mabel, the Love of my Life," the composition of which had cost him more than one bad headache; for Jack was no poet, and he did not wish any prying housemaid to come across his first literary effort, in which fervent sentiment had to atone for bad rhyme and shocking metre.

When he had finished his packing Jack went

downstairs to Sir Jasper's study and acquainted that gentleman with his contemplated departure.

"What, going to-day, Jack?" inquired the Baronet, with an air of surprise. "I thought you intended to give us the benefit of your society for another fortnight. What has induced you to alter your plans?"

"Oh, it's high time that I went back to town to crum for my examination if I want to pass well," Jack replied, somewhat lamely. "I've had a long holiday, and now I mean to go in for hard work."

"Of course; that is all very well in its way," said the Baronet, rather doubtfully; "but are you quite sure, Jack, that what I said to you last night has had no share in causing your departure? I should indeed feel sorry to think that, indirectly, I had been the means of driving you away from Deane Court."

"Why should your engagement with Mabel Hammonds affect my movements in any way?" returned Jack, with well-assumed indifference.

"You are growing fanciful, uncle Jasper," said the Baronet. "You know that, under any circumstances, Deane Court will always be your home, dear boy," continued Sir Jasper, earnestly. "You allude to my engagement as a settled fact, but I have not formally proposed to Mabel yet, remember."

"When you do she will accept you, sure as fate," said Jack, who was in that agreeable frame of mind which prompts a man to take a spiteful pleasure in aggravating his own sense of misery. "You must let me know how your wooing speeds, and I shall expect to be present, later on, at the wedding."

"You shall be my best man," replied Sir Jasper, unconscious of the pain he was inflicting, and really pleased to think that Jack was in nowise annoyed by his matrimonial projects. "What Jonathan will say when he hears that I am about to give a mistress to Deane Court, I hardly dare to imagine. Perhaps you would not mind breaking the news to him when the proper time comes, Jack?"

"Oh, not in the least!" said Jack, defiantly, as he left the study and prowled into the empty drawing-room with a mattered regret that no train would leave the little dead-and-alive country station for town until the evening.

After Jack had left her Mabel continued on her errand to the village almost mechanically. She felt stunned and well-nigh incapable of collected thought, owing to the shock she had received, and the stormy emotions of sorrow and despair that overwhelmed her.

She went to the little shop and purchased her silk and wools, taking whatever the shop-keeper offered her, since old gold and olive-green were alike to her just then. She visited the old people and listened patiently to their garrulous talk, with a little wistful envy at her heart the while, to think how much nearer, in all probability, they were to death than she herself could hope to be—she who might yet have to live through so many barren loveless years. The mild, commonplace remarks of the village doctor, a nervous young man who wore spectacles, and who had been nicknamed "Old Gig-lamps" on that account by the irreverent youths of the village, even brought a faint smile to her lips. But on her return to Deane Court the severe restraint she had placed upon herself suddenly gave way, and she broke into a passionate fit of weeping when within the safe shelter of her own room.

"I expected to receive some reproach from him," she sobbed. "I have lived in daily dread of this discovery, but I little thought how severely he would condemn me. Oh, Jack, Jack, you have broken my heart, and he cares not what I may have to suffer so long as his own selfish wants are supplied. I wonder what his latest demand consists of!"

With these words she opened a letter addressed to "M. H." which she had called for at the post-office on her way back, and glanced quickly through its contents. A request for money must have met her eyes, for she took a

five-pound note that formed part of her quarterly allowance from Sir Jasper, out of her desk, and put it in an envelope with a sheet of paper, on which she had written a few words in pencil.

Then summoning all her powers of self-control to her aid, she went down to the dining-room to join her aunt and Sir Jasper at luncheon. Much to her relief Jack Dalmeahoy was not present. In order to avoid meeting her again he had made some excuse and gone to the Rectory instead.

(To be continued.)

Do not be too generous with your temper. Keep it.

HOW PLATING CARDS ARE MADE.—The card-board is made in sheets large enough for fifty-four cards. The printing is done in six impressions—two colours for the back and four for the face. The pattern for the back is generally an interwoven check in green and yellow. When this is printed the cards are reversed, and the red plate put on. This prints the hearts and diamonds, the king's scabbard, crown and nose, Jack's hat and mantle, and several portions of the queen's dress. The blue and yellow colours follow in quick succession, both being used mainly in giving additional lustre to the court costumes. Then the black plate finishes. It is stated that two firms have recently gotten machinery which enables them to print colours with one impression, thereby saving five-sixths of the printing labour. When the cards are printed they are cut into long strips, each strip showing six cards placed lengthways. Then the cutting machine clips them out with rounded corners ready for the packer. At this stage only half the work is done. The sorting, counting and folding, require as many hands to perform as do the printing and clipping. The work is done mainly by girls.

HOW TO DEAL WITH THE DWELLINGS OF THE POOR.—The Sanitary Record suggests that every house let in lodgings or occupied by the poor should be regularly visited twice a year by an inspector, and more often on complaint being made, and notices should be served and enforced as regards the removal of all nuisances or defects found on the premises. The owners of these houses should be served with notices under the 35th section of the Sanitary Act, to do all that was necessary for cleansing and repairing the premises. The regulations made under this section should be uniform for the whole of London, instead of being, as at present, different in several parishes or districts which have made them. If the owner neglected to comply with the notices by a given day, he should be subject to a penalty of, say, not less than 3s. per day during which default was made. The name and address of the legal owner, i.e. the person receiving the rent—as well as of the actual owner, should be sent, under a penalty, to the office of the local authority for registration, so that there should not be any difficulty as to the service of notices. If, after having been summoned for the penalties, the owner still made default, the local authority should have power to close the room, or the whole house, if necessary, after having had a second notice served upon him of their intention to do so. An order of the magistrate to do structural works might be appealed against, but the house should be shut up during the appeal. No appeal should be allowed either as to penalties or the carrying out of ordinary sanitary work, such as the amendment or cleansing of drains, cleansing and ordinary repair of premises, providing an improved water supply to closets, or a separate supply for domestic purposes distinct from that for the closet. The power of appeal which already exists to the Metropolitan Board of Works as regards works done under the Metropolitan Local Management Act might still remain, as that refers, amongst other things, to the mode of and the materials used or the drainage of houses.

WHICH WAS THE HEIRESS?

CHAPTER XII.

DIANA quietly relapsed into unconsciousness, when she learned of the tragic fate of the beautiful stranger in whom she took such a warm interest. She was removed to her room at the hotel by Mr. Rainsforth, who appeared quite overwhelmed by her condition. A physician was summoned, and he pronounced her suffering from a severe shock to the nervous system. This, combined with several painful though not dangerous burns, would be sufficient to confine her to her room for several days. He carefully dressed the burns, administered a quieting potion to soothe her excitability, and went away, leaving her to the care of Grace and Mr. Rainsforth.

Grace stood still a few moments when the physician had gone, looking down at the white face of the suffering girl. She thought she was asleep, she lay so still, the long, dark fringe of her lashes lying motionless on her colourless cheek, her black hair, scorched and thinned by the fire she had passed through, streaming loosely over the snowy, ruffled pillow.

"The girl is actually growing quite pretty," the blonde said to herself, with a start. "She might prove a dangerous rival some day if we remain together. But that is not to be, and I will take care that she shall never pay a visit to my English home. She must fully understand that!"

She crossed the room to Mr. Rainsforth's side, where he stood looking moodily out in the direction of the glowing embers of the burning house.

"I wish to tell you something," she said, in a whisper, laying her white, jewelled hand on his arm.

"Well," he said, turning round abruptly, "what is it?"

"She glanced round toward the quiet form on the bed, then back at him.

"It is this," she said, softly. "When I came up from the ball-room to-night I came into Diana's room for her to plait my hair for the night as she usually does. I found her lying on the floor moaning with pain. When I tried to raise her up by the shoulders she flinched and cried out that I hurt her. I asked her what had happened to her, and she seemed confused, and declined to tell me."

Lady Grace paused and gave him a keen glance from her pretty blue eyes that could look very keen and penetrating when they chose. His glance wavered and fell before that look.

"What had happened to her?" said she, shortly.

"How should I know?" he suddenly inquired.

"You do know," she answered, steadily.

"Tell me the truth."

"Well, then, if you must know the truth, I struck her in a moment of passion!" he replied, in a low tone.

The listener recoiled before his cruel look.

"Why did you do that? What had she done?" she gasped, in profound surprise.

He took her hand and drew her nearer to him.

"Grace," he whispered, hoarsely, "she suspects my secret! She dared to taunt me with it!"

Grace's face whitened to a corpse-like pallor, and her eyes looked wild and frightened. She stared speechlessly into the man's stern, set face.

"Ah, you may well look frightened," he said. "It is true. Sit down here, Grace, I have much to say to you."

He wheeled an easy-chair to the window, and the beautiful girl sank into it. Then he brought another for himself, and with their heads very close together they conversed a long while, both visibly excited.

"I will never give it up now," muttered the girl, clenching her white hands passionately.

"Never, never, not even if I have to—"

She stopped short and would not speak the thought in her own mind, but Mr. Rainsforth understood it and nodded his approval.

"Spoken like my own brave girl!" he said. "And indeed it may have to come to that yet, for she is terribly in the way. As long as she lives our future is menaced with danger."

"Oh, if she had but perished in the fire to-night!" muttered the girl, wickedly.

"She would have done so but for that jack-anapes, Arthur Delamere," said Mr. Rainsforth, with a scowl. "Do you know, Grace, I believe that he is her lover?"

"Well, let him be," was the scornful answer. "I have never liked him. She is quite welcome to his love. But it is wasted on her, after all, for she dislikes the proud, conceited prig as much as I do."

Grace's words were prompted solely by pique, for she had tried hard to enlist Arthur Delamere in her train of admirers, but his perfect politeness was so distinctly tinged with careless indifference that she resented it with all the petty spite of a little nature.

"I dislike the fellow as much as you do!" was the answer, "and yet I am very sorry that he has not been attracted by you instead of Diana. I learned to-day from Sir Harold that the haughty prig, as you call him, is a distant relative of yours."

"He has never taken the trouble to apprise me of it," said Grace, with a bitterness of tone that belied her assertion of indifference.

"Yes, and I learned more," continued Mr. Rainsforth. "Arthur Delamere, plain, untitled gentleman as he is now, is the next heir to your grandfather's earldom. Nothing but the life of that old man stands between him and the title."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Grace, with a start.

"Yes, it is true; and Sir Harold told me also that Lord Waverley had cherished a desire to unite one of his recently deceased grandchildren to Arthur, that his title and his large private fortune might descend undivided to the next-of-kin. His other descendants being dead, you can guess what will happen when he sees you, Grace."

Grace blushed and smiled.

"He will wish to marry me to Arthur Delamere," she said, quickly.

"Yes!" he answered, watching her keenly.

"The Earl will not find me averse to his plan," Grace rejoined demurely.

"I thought you disliked him, Grace," she said, quickly.

"I spoke falsely to you just now," she answered, unblushingly. "I love Arthur Delamere, but his indifference to me has piqued me beyond measure. I will win him now if it is in woman's wiles to do it. What you have just told me is but an added incentive for me to hold my position against all the world. I hate her now," she added, turning a vindictive look towards the still form lying on the bed.

Mr. Rainsforth smiled at her vehemence.

"I am glad to find you so determined," he said. "With such a brave will you cannot fail to succeed. But it is worth a great effort to win such a fortune and such a husband. With such a prize in view you will not stickle at anything, will you, my dear?"

"No!" she breathed, in a cautious whisper.

"That is well, my dear. I will aid and abet you all I can. You will owe me a heavy debt of gratitude for all I have undertaken and accomplished in your behalf. Can you pledge yourself to reward me properly?"

"You shall be richly repaid—never fear," she answered, promptly.

"That is what I want. I shall follow you to the South of England very soon. But we will speak of this again before we leave. At present I will retire, and leave you to keep vigil over yonder little spitefire."

Grace turned such a significant look toward the bed that she shook his head warningly.

"Not now, my dear," he whispered, softly.

"That affair will wait a little longer. I will attend to it myself."

He tiptoed across the room and went softly

out. Then Grace turned round and saw Diana rising up in the bed and looking fixedly at her.

"What!" she said, trying to speak unconcernedly, "are you waking up, Diana?"

"I have never been asleep yet," said Diana, with perfect calmness. "I was very drowsy, but your whispering disturbed me so that I could not sleep."

"Did—did you hear what we were talking of?" demanded Grace, falteringly.

"I did not listen—I did not care to hear," said Diana, speaking with the languid calmness and gentle serenity of one under the influence of an opiate. "I was wishing all the while that you would stop and let me go to sleep. It was very annoying."

"Well, you can go to sleep now—there is nothing to disturb you further," said her cousin, shortly.

But Diana was staring at her with wide, wondering eyes.

"Grace," she said abruptly, "how did I get out of that burning house? I do not remember coming out again."

"Arthur Delamere went after you and carried you out unconscious. You must have perished in there but for his timely aid," said Grace, reluctantly.

"I owe my life to Arthur Delamere, then," said Diana, dropping back on the pillow, with a long and bitter sigh. "And I would rather owe it to anyone else on earth than him!"

"You owe him no gratitude," answered Grace carelessly. "It was but a cancelled debt. You saved his life, and he has saved yours in return. You are quits now."

"I did not believe he had that much manhood in him," said Diana, musingly. "I thought him a mere white-handed, haughty trifler. I shall think better of him hereafter."

Grace made no answer. It annoyed her to see that Arthur Delamere was gaining ground in the good opinion of Diana. She turned away and busied herself in preparing a second draught of her sleeping potion, and offered it to her with a great show of hypocritical kindness.

"Take your medicine, dear," she said. "It will put you to sleep. I am sorry my idle whispering with your father disturbed you, but I will be as still as a mouse now while you take your nap."

"I see no need for you to sit up with me, Grace," answered Diana, as she drained the glass obediently. "You may go to bed and leave me. I shall go to sleep, and not need your attention."

Grace was always selfish, and though she knew that Diana was really too unwell to be left alone, she took her dismissal very gladly, and went away to her room, and was soon fast asleep.

As soon as she was gone Diana sat up in the bed with a look of terror and fear on her pale face.

A few words of that whispered conversation in her room had reached her, and filled her with terror and dread.

She knew that she stood in Grace Rainsforth's way, and that her life was menaced by the cruel man who had so maltreated her that night.

She comprehended that her suspicions were true, and that she, Diana, was indeed the grandchild of Lord Waverley, and that Grace had been fraudulently substituted in her place.

But she also comprehended fully how utterly futile and dangerous it would be for her to make any attempt to prove her rights.

A vague thought darted into her mind that she might appeal to Sir Harold Meredith or Arthur Delamere to help her, but she dismissed the idea the next moment. She believed that they would laugh at any assertion made with no more proof to support it than she had at command.

Mrs. Mainwaring was the only one she could think of in this trying hour as a friend, and she, alas! was dead—buried in the heap of smoking ruins across the green lawn yonder.

Weeping bitterly at the tragic fate of the beautiful woman, Diana laid her head down

upon the pillow again, and tried to lose herself in sleep, but the strong sedative Grace had administered to her was of no force against the grief and terror that possessed her. She rose at last, and carefully locking her door, dressed herself in the dark travelling suit she had worn when she came to Edinburgh. She had suddenly conceived the idea of flight. Youth and hope were too strong within her for her to tamely remain in the power of the man who thirsted for her life.

"I will go away—no matter where—so that I get out of his way," she said to herself, in a frenzy of terror as she arranged her toilet with trembling fingers.

Diana was a very brave girl ordinarily. She had faced imminent peril in the rise of the new river with a dauntless heart, and she had rushed into the fire to seek Mrs. Mainwaring without a single pang of terror at her own terrible danger; but this death that threatened her now had in it none of the elements of heroism that had prompted her glorious self-sacrifice before. This new danger that menaced her at the hands of those with whom she had passed all her brief, neglected life, was terrible to contemplate. She could not choose but flee from it.

She quickly packed a few articles of clothing into a little bag, and for the second time that night stole quietly out of the hotel and down upon the lawn.

The railway station was not very far from the hotel. She hurriedly made her way to it, but she did not enter the little waiting-room. Weak and weary, she sat down upon the ground outside, and waited perhaps half-an-hour until the express came thundering along on its way to London. When it came to a stop at the station, she crept into a carriage, hardly noticing the class, and seated herself in a dark corner, with her veil drawn closely over her face. Ten minutes later she was speeding along in the faintly glimmering dawn of the new day, away from the reach of her cruel and relentless enemies.

CHAPTER XIII.

It was late in the day before Diana's flight became known. Mr. Rainsforth and the heiress were both tardy risers, and it was not until a messenger came from Arthur Delamere to inquire how the young girl passed the night that her absence was discovered. Then the grief and terror of the bereaved father were acted so naturally and touchingly that even Arthur Delamere, who had deemed him a cold and unloving parent, was somewhat deceived by his acting.

"Oh, Grace, how could you have been so careless?" he exclaimed, again and again, while Mr. Delamere, who had come over to the hotel immediately after the reception of the ill news, stood silently by. "She was ill, and her head was turned by the dreadful scene she had passed through. You should not have left her alone a moment. She has gone away in some wild, delirious fever of the brain, and she will be lost, and perish miserably. Oh, my daughter, my daughter!"

Grace threw herself into his arms and sobbed out her grief and contrition in such tender, womanly, sorrowful terms that the young Englishman began to think he had wronged her in his secret heart; for though he acknowledged her grace and beauty, he had condemned her as a heartless and empty-headed coquette who cared for nothing but dress and admiration. So little had he esteemed her that he had never wished to apprise her of that distant relationship, or the fact that he was the next male in succession to her grandfather's earldom. But now, though his heart was torn with anxiety over the probable fate of the missing girl, he was touched by the soft womanliness of Grace, and said to her, quite gently:

"Do not grieve so hopelessly, Lady Grace, I will at once communicate with the police. She shall be found if human skill can avail. I will go at once so that not a moment may be lost."

He went out, and the girl turned quickly to Mr. Rainsforth.

"I believe that Diana has run away from us," she said, softly. "She must have overheard some of our conversation, and being frightened, took that means to evade us."

"If that is the case we must find her by all means," said he, with a start. "If she gets away and betrays us we will have a terrible fight to retain our position! You should not have left her alone for an instant. You are greatly to blame, Grace."

"I thought she was too ill to get out of her bed, and I was tired and sleepy," was the sulky response.

"If it be as you suppose, she has most probably gone off in one of the trains," said Mr. Rainsforth. "I will go down to the station and make inquiries."

He went to the station and learned that only the express passenger train had passed since the fire that night, and that no one had left in that train except Sir Harold Meredith, who had taken a ticket to Liverpool. None of the officials had seen any other person enter the train at all, and they affirmed positively that Diana had not gone off that way.

"I did not know that Sir Harold had gone away," said Mr. Rainsforth, turning to Mr. Delamere in surprise.

"Yes, he went to Liverpool on business," said Arthur; "and to make assurance doubly sure, I will telegraph to him immediately, and ask him if he saw Diana in the train."

The telegram was sent immediately, and directly the answer came back:

"MEREDITH TO DELAMERE:—
"I have not seen or heard aught of Mr. Rainsforth's daughter since I left you."

So the mystery of Diana's disappearance remained a mystery still. Men went out in every direction, the woods and mountains were searched, but no trace of her was found, and at last they gave up the quest. Every one believed that she was dead. They thought she had either drowned herself in the river, or been lost in the mountains.

The hapless search being over, Mr. Rainsforth declared that he should accompany the party to England, that he might wear out his terrible grief by a change of scene and travel. So the saddened party left Edinburgh and went on to Liverpool, where they were to stay a day or two, and where they were immediately joined by the baronet.

CHAPTER XIV.

We will return to Diana in her terrified flight from the dangers that menaced her from the man who claimed her as his daughter.

She slipped into the carriage with its dimly-burning light, and instinctively seeking the most obscure corner, sank down wearily into it.

There were very few passengers in the carriage, and these were mostly asleep with their hats tilted over their faces to shut out the light. Only one passenger entered the carriage after Diana, and he dropped into the seat behind her without noticing her at all. Leaning back in the seat, he tilted his hat over his eyes like the rest, and surrendered himself to thought. And then they were whirled away through the beautiful mountainous country towards their destination.

Presently they drew up at a junction, and the guard came along with his lantern to examine the tickets. The man behind Diana roused up promptly and showed his ticket, then relaxed into his musing mood.

"Ticket, miss," said the guard, touching Diana gently on the shoulder to awaken her. He thought she was asleep.

There was no reply. Diana had fallen into a lethargic state from which it was difficult to rouse her. The guard shook her a little more roughly this time, and repeated, in a louder tone:

"Ticket, if you please, miss!"

Diana lifted her head wearily, pushed back

the veil from her face, and looked around at the impatient guard.

"Did you speak to me?" she asked slowly.

"Yes, miss; I am waiting for your ticket," said the man, thinking to himself that she must be very stupid not to know what he wanted.

"I—I haven't any ticket," said Diana in a dull tone, like one dazed.

"Haven't a ticket!" said the man, in surprise.

"Neglected to get it, eh? Oh! very well, the money will do as well. How far are you going?"

"As far as the train goes," said Diana, with feverish energy.

"We go as far as London. Fifty-seven and six, first-class, is the fare, and I am in a hurry, if you please," said the guard.

Diana started and looked at him. Her embarrassing position suddenly began to dawn upon her. She put her small hand up to her brow in bewilderment.

"I—I haven't any money," she faltered.

"Have you lost your purse?" inquired the man, in surprise.

"No, but I haven't any money," was the frank reply.

The guard hardly knew what to say to this inexplicable conduct. He began to be angry, and said to her, sharply:

"Well, didn't you know that we can't allow people to travel for nothing? You must give me your name and address."

Under the light of the lantern he held close to her face, a scarlet blush kindled in Diana's cheeks.

"I—I never thought of it!" she faltered. "I was in such a hurry to get away I just came in the train as soon as it stopped. I didn't think about money; and I can't give you my name and address."

The man regarded her curiously. He thought she acted queerly, as if her mind was not right. But then, he said to himself, she might be acting so to deceive him. The latter idea seemed to his mind the most plausible.

"I'm sorry to seem rude to a lady," he said, "but you must get out."

The quick tears sprang to the girl's beautiful dark eyes.

"Oh, pray, pray don't do that!" she exclaimed, impulsively.

"Compelled to do it, miss," was the grim reply. "Must do my duty. You can send a telegram back to your friends to come for you. Be quick, miss, I can't keep the train waiting."

At that moment a hand touched Diana's arm. She turned with a start, and saw Sir Harold Meredith sitting behind her.

"Oh! Sir Harold," she cried, "I—I—" and then utterly unnerved, she burst into tears.

The baronet turned to the bewildered guard.

"It's all right," he said, "this young lady is a friend of mine. She will go with me. She has forgotten her purse—that's all."

He paid the fare, not to London, but to Liverpool, at once, and the guard, quite satisfied, ran to the door, slammed it, and blew his whistle. In a few minutes they were whirled onward again, and then the baronet turned to the still sobbing girl.

"Diana, my dear child, don't weep so bitterly," he said, in a kind, fatherly voice. "I see you are in trouble. I will help you anyway I can."

The kindness of the tone provoked a fresh burst of tears from the agitated girl. She sobbed as if her tender heart would break. He leaned over and spoke to her again.

"Try to control yourself, little one. You will draw public attention to your troubles unless you calm yourself. Come, be brave, like the little heroine you are, and tell me why you are running away from your father?"

"How do you know I am running away?" she asked, checking her tears by a strong effort of will, and looking at him in grave surprise.

"I guessed as much," said the baronet, shrewdly. "Come, little Diana, isn't it true?"

"Yes, it's true," she said falteringly, "and

—and if I thought you were my friend, Sir Harold I would tell you the reason why."

Sir Harold left his own seat and sat down by the forlorn little girl.

"Diana," he said earnestly, "there are very few people—none perhaps—who like and admire you more than I do. I would do anything to serve you. You see I have smoothed matters with the guard, so that you can go on with me at least to Liverpool unmolested. Is not that an earnest of my good intentions towards you?"

"Yes, oh, yes! and I thank you a thousand times, Sir Harold. You have done me an incalculable service," breathed Diana, lifting her eyes to his in fervent gratitude.

"And I am ready to do still more for you, my child. If you need a friend, as it seems to me you really do, you can command my services to an unlimited extent," said the baronet, earnestly.

Diana looked into his noble, sympathetic face and felt that he was telling the truth. In her wretched and forlorn condition she felt as if Heaven itself had sent her this kind friend.

So as calmly as she could Diana told Sir Harold the story of her neglected life, passing lightly over some parts, but detailing with wondrous power and pathos all that happened to her in her one day and night at the hotel.

Sir Harold listened to her in perfect silence, yet with an earnest attention that showed he was devouring every word. His kind blue eyes glowed with feeling as she told her simple, pathetic story. Yet when she had finished he said, half teasingly:

"And so, my poor, forlorn little Diana, you believe that you are Lord Waverley's granddaughter?"

He half expected that her quick temper would blaze up at the teasing words, but instead she only said sadly, with a sensitive quiver of her scarlet lips:

"I was afraid you would laugh at me."

"Forgive me, my child," said the baronet, contritely, "I was only teasing you; for I believe with you that a monstrous wrong has been perpetrated by the man who calls you his daughter. I think there can be little doubt that you are Lady Agatha's daughter. I think your great resemblance to her has drawn my heart to you from the first."

"You knew her?" cried Diana, with a start.

"Yes, I knew her," said the baronet, and a shadow crept over his face with the words; "I knew her, and—yes, I will tell you that, too, little Diana—I loved her. I hoped to win her for my wife. She seemed to like me until—until your father came—and then—well, then, little Diana, I lost her. But I have remained single ever since for her sake; so you can see I would do anything in my power for her daughter."

"Yet you never seemed to be fond of Grace," said Diana, deeply moved by the few quiet words in which the sorrow of a life-time was so patiently told.

"No, she never seemed like Agatha's child to me. There was something about her that repulsed me always, though I tried to love her for the sake of the woman she claimed for her mother. I did not think of doubting Mr. Rainsforth's assertion at first. I thought that Grace probably resembled her father's side of the house rather than her mother's, but Diana, I know better now. I can see the resemblance to your mother's family in every line of your face. All of the Broughtons were dark and beautiful."

"I am not like them, then!" said the girl, wistfully. "Grace always said I was black and ugly."

"Never mind what she said," said the baronet, smiling. "She was not an impartial judge. You are a thousand times lovelier in my eyes than she is. But your beauty needs polish and culture. Do you know what I mean to do with you, my child, when you arrive at Liverpool?"

"No!" said Diana, looking at him in wonder.

"I am going to place you at the best board-

ing-school I can find as my adopted daughter. And the better to conceal your identity in case your pretended father should seek you here, I shall give you a fictitious name. I shall provide you with a maid and everything needful. That is my part of the contract. Yours is to study hard and improve every hour, that you may fit yourself to take your place as Lord Waverley's granddaughter."

"Ah, that can never be," she said, sadly. "How could I prove my claim?"

"I shall make it my business to seek for proofs," he answered, stoutly. "It may be hard to do, I grant you, but I will try my best. You shall see if I do not environ that villain Rainsforth with such evidence that he shall be compelled to acknowledge the terrible fraud he has attempted, and reinstate you in your true place."

He spoke more cheerfully than he felt, for he knew what a stupendous task he would find it to unmask the villain's deep-laid schemes. Yet he swore to himself that he would render that service to Lady Agatha's daughter if it rested in the power of mortal to accomplish it.

"How shall I repay you for all your kindness to me, Sir Harold?" she asked, with the bright tears of gratitude shining in her dark eyes.

"By giving me a daughter's love," he answered, kindly. "I am old enough to be your father, Diana, and you might have been my daughter in truth if your mother had not broken her troth with me. But you shall be to me as my own child, Diana, and I pledge myself solemnly to your service until you have your own again."

And thus in her hour of deadly peril, Heaven raised up a friend for the forlorn and lonely girl, for Sir Harold Meredith kept his promise to the letter, and no father ever showed greater kindness to his own child than did he to his adopted daughter.

So when they had safely reached Liverpool, and the telegram came from Edinburgh inquiring after his *protégée*, he returned the perfectly true yet rather ambiguous message that he had not seen Mr. Rainsforth's daughter.

(To be continued.)

MOTHER - IN - LAW.

CHAPTER I.

"Five pounds of grapes!" said old Mrs. Arnold, in astonishment. "Are you quite sure that you understood your mistress's order, Jape? Hot-house grapes are three-and-sixpence a pound, and surely for so small a dinner-party as this—"

"There's no mistake, ma'am," said Jane, pertly. Servants will soon learn the spirit of their superiors, and Jane knew that young Mrs. Arnold was not particularly partial to her husband's stepmother. "I took the order myself, and it ain't likely I should be mistook."

"Jane is quite right," said Mrs. Evelyn Arnold, who came in at that moment, a handsome brunette, in a pink cashmere morning-dress, trimmed with band, *à la militaire*, of black velvet—rather a contrast to the neat, cambric gown which her mother-in-law was accustomed to wear about her morning avocations at home. "And I do wish, mamma, you wouldn't interfere!"

The old lady's serene brow flushed.

"My dear," she remonstrated, "I do not wish to meddle with your concerns; but I really fear that Evelyn's income—"

"Evelyn's income is his own, to spend as he pleases," interrupted the young lady. "And you seem to forget, mamma, that people don't live nowadays as they did when you were a girl."

Mrs. Arnold said nothing more. It was not the first time, nor yet the second, that she had been given to understand by Mrs. Evelyn that her interposition in the household affairs was unwelcome.

The stepson, whom she loved with as fond a

devotion as if he had been her own child, had married a beautiful girl, and settled in London.

So far, all was well, although Mrs. Arnold had secretly hoped that he would love sweet Kate Lindsay, the clergyman's daughter of Merrivale, and settle down on the old farm, as his father before him had done.

Yet if Evelyn was happy, she also would rejoice she assured herself, even although he preferred imperious Marguerite Ellerton to Kate Lindsay, and the bustle of the great metropolis to the sweet peace of the vales and glens.

If Evelyn was happy! Yes, there was the question. And sometimes Mrs. Arnold feared that he was not, in spite of his smiles and assumed cheerfulness.

It had been his fondest hope that his stepmother might be one of his household after his marriage. Mrs. Arnold had hoped so, too; but after this, her first visit, she felt that the dream was in vain.

"Oil and water will not mix," she said to herself, with a sigh. "And I belong to a past generation."

As she left the store-closet, where Marguerite and her cook were holding counsel as to a proposed dinner-party, she went slowly and spiritlessly up to the breakfast-room, where Evelyn was reading the morning paper before the fire.

"Evelyn," she said, a little abruptly, "I think I had better go back to the Chestnuts this week."

"Mother," he remonstrated.

"I don't think that Marguerite wants me here."

Evelyn Arnold reddened.

"I hope, mother," he said, "she has not said anything to—"

"It is not natural that she should need my presence," said the old lady, gently. "I might have known it; now I am certain of it. Home is the best place for me. But remember one thing, dear Evelyn. Do not live beyond your income. Marguerite is young and thoughtless. You yourself are inexperienced—"

"Oh, it's all right, mother," said the young man, carelessly. But I did hope that you could be happy here!"

Mrs. Arnold shook her head.

"I shall see you sometimes," said she. "If ever you are in trouble Evelyn—you or Marguerite, either—you will know where to come."

So the old lady went away from the pretty bison of a house in Mayfair, with its bay windows, its *portières* and the boxes of flowers in all the casements.

"Marguerite," said the young husband, as he studied over the list of weekly bills a short time subsequently, "I believe my mother was right. We are overrunning the constable, and we must pull up at once, or we shall find ourselves in the wrong box."

"Pshaw," said Marguerite, who was sewing a frill of point-lace on to the neck of a rose-coloured satin reception-dress; "what has put that ridiculous idea into you head, Evelyn?"

"Facts and figures," answered Evelyn. "Just look here, Madge."

"But I don't want to look," said Madge, impatiently turning her head away, "and I won't—so there! Of course one can't live without money, especially if one goes into society."

Evelyn whistled under his breath.

"But Marguerite," said he, "if a man's income is a hundred a month, and he spends two hundred, how are the accounts to balance at the year's end?"

"I don't know anything about balances and accounts," said Marguerite, with a gay laugh. "How do you like this dress, Evelyn?" holding up the gleaming folds of the pink satin. "I shall wear it on Thursday evening."

"Do you think, Madge," said the young man, gently, "that it is wise for us to go so much into society and keep so much company on our income?"

"That arrow came from your mother's

quiver, Evelyn!" said Madge, with another laugh. "She was always preaching about your 'income.'"

"And, after all," said Evelyn, "what do we care for the fashionable people to whose houses we go, and whom we invite to our parties? They wouldn't one of them regret if we were to go to Jericho to-morrow."

"I would as soon die at once as live without society!" said Marguerite. "Do leave off lecturing me, Evelyn! Society is all that makes life worth having for me."

And, with a deep sigh, Evelyn held his peace.

CHAPTER II.

THAT was a long, lonely winter for Mrs. Arnold, senior, at "The Chestnuts."

Snow set in early; the river froze over, as if it were sheeted with iron, except in the one dismal place down in the ravine, where a restless pool of ink-black water boiled and bubbled at the foot of a perpendicular mass of grey rock, under the shadow of gloomy evergreens.

The sunshine glittered with frozen brightness over the hill, and the old lady was often secretly sad at heart as she sat all alone in the crimson parlour, by the big fireplace, when the logs blazed in the twilight.

And as the New Year passed, and the bitter cold of January took possession of the frozen world, a vague apprehension crept into her heart.

"Something is going to happen," she said.

"I am not superstitious, but there are times when the shadow of coming events stretches darkly across the heart. Something is going to happen!"

And one afternoon, as the amber sunset blazed behind the leafless trees, turning the snowy fields to masses of molten pearl, she put on her fur-lined hood and cloak.

"I will go and take a walk," said she. "I shall certainly become a hypochondriac if I sit all the time by the fire and nurse my morbid fancies like this."

She took a long brisk walk, down by the ruins of the old mill, through the woods, across the frozen marshes, and then she paused.

"I will come back by the Black Pool," she thought. "It is a wild and picturesque spot in winter, with icicles hanging to the tree-boughs, and weird ice-effects over the face of the old grey rock."

It was a dark and gloomy place, funereally shaded by the old elms, which grew there to a huge size; and when Mrs. Arnold got beneath their boughs she started back.

Was it the illusive glimmer of the darkening twilight?—or was it really a man who stood close to the edge of the Black Pool?

"Evelyn! Oh, Evelyn, my son!"

She was barely in time to catch him in her arms and drag him back from the awful death to which he was hurling himself.

When they reached the wainscoted parlour, where the blazing logs cast a ruddy reflection on the red moreen curtains, Mrs. Arnold looked into her stepson's face with loving eyes.

"And now, Evelyn," said she, "tell me all about it. Heaven has been very good to you in saving you from a terrible crime."

"Mother, why did you stop me?" he said, recklessly. "I am a ruined man! I shall be dishonoured in the sight of the world! Death would be preferable, a thousand times, to disgrace!"

"Evelyn," said the old lady, tenderly, "do you remember when you used to get into boyish scrapes at school? Do you remember how you used to confide your troubles to me? Let us forget all the years that have passed. Let us be child and mother once again."

So he told her all—of the reckless expenditure on Marguerite's part—his own, also, he confessed—which had woven itself like a fatal web about his feet—of the unpaid bills, the clamouring tradesfolk, the threats of public exposure, which had driven him at last to the forgery of his employer's signature, in order to free himself from one or two of the most pressing of these demands.

"And if my investment in the foreign railway bonds had proved a success," he said, eagerly, "I could have taken up every one of the notes before they came due. But there was a change in the market, and now—now this bill will be presented next week, and my villainy will be patent to all the world! Oh, mother, mother! why did you not let me slip myself into the Black Pool?"

"Evelyn," said his stepmother, "what is the amount of these—these forged bills?"

"Two thousand pounds!" he answered, staring gloomily into the fire.

"Exactly the amount in the Three per Cents which your father left me," said Mrs. Arnold. "They would have been yours at my death. They are yours now, Evelyn!"

"Mother, you don't mean—"

"Take them," said Mrs. Arnold, tenderly pressing her lips to his forehead. "Go to town the first thing to-morrow morning and wipe this stain from your life as you would wipe a few blurred figures from a slate. And then begin the battle of life anew."

And up in the little room which he had occupied as a child, Evelyn Arnold slept the first peaceful slumbers which had descended upon his weary eyelids for many and many a night.

In the midnight train from town came Marguerite to the Chenevuts, with a pale, terrified face and haggard eyes.

"Oh, mother, mother!" she sobbed; "where is he—my husband? He has left me, and the letter on the dressing-table declared that he would never return alive! Oh, mother, it is my fault! I have ruined him! Help me, comfort me, tell me what I shall do!"

Mrs. Arnold took her daughter-in-law's hand, and led her softly to the little room where her husband lay sweetly sleeping.

Marguerite drew a long, sobbing sigh of relief, and clasped her hands together as if in mute prayer at the sight.

"Hush!" said the old lady; "do not wake him. He is worn out, both in mind and body. Only be thankful that Heaven has given him back to you, almost from the grave."

And as the two women sat together by the blazing logs in the crimson parlour, Mrs. Arnold told Marguerite the whole story of the meeting at the Black Pool.

"Mother," said Marguerite, with a quivering lip, "it is my doing. You warned me of this long ago. Oh, why did I give no heed to your words? I deserve it all."

"You will do better for the future, my dear," said the old lady, kindly. "Only be brave and steadfast."

So the young people went back to town and commenced the world anew, withdrawing from the maelstrom of "society," and living within themselves. Mrs. Arnold, senior, came with them, and Madge, as everyone calls her now, is learning the art of housekeeping under her direction.

"Mamma is an angel!" says the young wife, enthusiastically. "And if I could only be just like her, I should have no higher ambition."

H. G.

FACETIÆ.

A COUNTRY graveyard contains a tombstone erected to the memory of "three twins."

The gratification which wealth can bestow is not in mere possession, nor in lavishing it with prodigality, but in the wise application of it.

There is a tradition of a Cunard captain of years ago, who in his off-days prided himself on his curt replies to inquirers. A lady on his ship asked him a civil question one day when he was especially cross. "Don't trouble me, ma'am," was the response; "go ask the cook—perhaps he'll tell you." "Excuse me," she said, instantly, "I supposed you were the cook when I addressed you." The captain was polite all the rest of the trip.

"When is a horse not worth sixpence?—When it is worth less (worthless)."

In choosing a wife, always select one that will wash.

ELLA (five years old), who has broken a window. "Papa, dear, don't beat me; subtract it rather from my marriage dowry."

It is said that a pair of pretty eyes are the best mirror for a man to shave by. Exactly so; and it is unquestionably the case that many a man has been shaved by them.

Why should we never be frightened at the appearance of a ghost? Because, if it is a ghost, its appearance must, in the nature of things, be immaterial.

"Do you see that lovely girl over there, Tom? Well, she is called Elaine, after Tennyson's heroine." "Is she, though? When she is in one of her tantrums, I should call her Madeleine."

A LIMITED MONARCHY.—"What is a limited monarchy, Johnny?" "Well, my idea of a limited monarchy is where the ruler doesn't have much to rule." "Give me an example." "An example! Lemme see! Well, if you was bossin' yourself, for instance."

"May," asked a little Burlington girl of a companion, "what do you suppose is the difference between a head and a beau ideal?"

"Well, I don't know," was the frank response, "unless they leave off the ideal after they get married."

"Those birds flying over yonder are aquatic birds, I suppose?" asked the young man in the seal-brown suit of the captain of the steamer. "No, they ain't," was the scornful reply. "Them's duck's."

"Yes," said the young gentleman, "Charlie has put a deliberate slur upon me." "What was it?" "Introduced me to his girl." "How is that a slur?" "Why, isn't it equivalent to saying, 'Oh, you're no account! There's no danger of your outting me out.'"

"How profoundly still and beautiful is the night!" she whispered, leaning her finely veined temple against his coat-collar and fixing her dreamy eyes on the far-off heavens. "How soothing!" "Yes," he replied, toying with the golden aureole of her hair; "and what a night to shoot cats!"

CHARLIE went to rest the apple of his eye the other evening, and, after a proper amount of affectionate conversation, said: "I'll give you a pair of earrings, dear, if you'll earn them by letting me bore your ears." "Haven't I earned them already?" queried the fair object of his affections. Charlie "slept."

"I was induced to-day, by the impertinency of your traveller," wrote a German tradesman to a wholesale dealer, "to give him an order; but, as I did it merely with the object of getting rid of him in a civil manner and without loss of time, I must ask you to cancel the same."

A WELL-KNOWN surgeon entered a hatter's to buy a new hat. The shopman carried away his old one to measure it. During the interval an indignant and energetic individual entered the shop, rushed up to the surgeon, and exclaimed: "This hat of mine doesn't fit!" The great surgeon replied: "No, sir; neither does your coat."

LET THEM WIGGLE.—A collegiate, enlightening a farmer upon animalcules, applied his microscope to the cheese, saying: "Now look, and see them wiggle." "Well," said the farmer, placing the cheese in his mouth, "let them wiggle. I can stand it as long as they can."

Two rival belles, at an evening party, were seated in the conservatory with their respective cavaliers, enjoying their supper. The gas was turned down somewhat, as it should be in a conservatory at an evening party. "My dear Julia," said one of the fascinating creatures, "how beautiful your complexion is—in this dim light!" "Oh, thank you!" responded her rival. "And how lovely you look in the dark!"

A MAN met an old woman driving several asses. "Adieu, mother of asses!" cried he. "Adieu, my son," was the old crone's reply. That fellow went his way, feeling for his ears.

"Miss, you will take my left arm?" "Yes, sir; and you, too." "I can't spare but the arm, miss," replied the bachelor. "Then," replied she, "I can't take it. My motto is, go the whole hog or nothing."

"I do wish you would come home earlier," said a woman to her husband. "I am afraid to stay alone. I always imagine that there's somebody in the house, but when you come I know there isn't."

DEAN SWIFT, hearing of a carpenter falling through the scaffolding of a house which he was engaged in repairing, dryly remarked that he liked to see a mechanic go through his work promptly.

A YOUNG lady of five-and-thirty, being asked whether she liked "Hymns Ancient and Modern," preferred the modern "hims," but would rather listen to an ancient "him" than no "him" at all.

"I want to get a dog's muzzle," said a little fellow entering an ironmonger's shop. "Is it for your father?" asked the cautious shopkeeper. "No, of course it isn't," replied the little fellow, indignantly. "It's for our dog."

A WAS says to one of his friends in the most solemn manner: "If my employer does not take back what he said to me this morning, I shall leave his house." "Why, what did he say?" "He told me that I could look for another place."

"Well," says a philosophic friend to the invalid, "had a good night last night?" "No, I never suffered so in my life." "H'm! that's bad! But," brightening up, "you know a bad night is better than no night at all."

"Mamma, there's a spider on the back of papa's neck. Shall I hit it?" "No," said the mother, considerably; "your father might not approve of it. He's a member of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals."

A DOCTOR in Ireland was disturbed one night by a rapping on the door, and, opening it, found a labouring man who had come for him. "Have you been long here?" said the doctor. "Indade I have," answered Pat. "But why didn't you ring the night-bell?" "Och, be cause I was afraid of disturbin' your honour!"

A CELEBRATED manager is on the hunt for a new curiosity for his show. He is seeking to find a young married man whose wife can cook as well as his mother did. Twenty-six counties have been explored this far without success.

A LITTLE four-year-old child who was saying her prayers at her mother's knee, concluded as usual: "Bless papa, mamma, grandpapa, and grandmamma, uncles, aunts," &c., and then said: "Oh, mammy dear, I do wish these people would pray for themselves, for I am so tired of praying for them."

A MOTHER threatening to send her little boy to bed fifteen minutes before his time, "unless he behaved better," the little fellow exclaimed, "Ma, you want to play fair, I s'pose?" "Of course, I do, my son." "Then, when I behave first-rate, why don't you ever let me stay up fifteen minutes beyond my time?"

A LITTLE INTERVIEW.

REPORTER—"Are not prima donnas, as a rule, ladies of good education outside of music and the languages?"

Opera Manager—"Many of them are, generally speaking; but all very weak in one branch."

Reporter—"What branch is that?"

Opera Manager—"Mathematics."

Reporter—"Indeed!"

Opera Manager—"Yes, none of them can be made to understand that there is no such thing as 250 per cent. of the receipts."

SOCIETY.

HER MAJESTY recently presented all the members of the household and servants at Osborne with a portrait of John Brown, who, by-the-way, figures tenth prominently in Her Majesty's new volume of "More Leaves from a Diary," and to whom, indeed, it is dedicated. Brown had his detractors amongst his fellow-servants—the inevitable result of his rapid promotion—but, as a rule, he used his influence for the benefit of his less fortunate companions, and so earned their goodwill.

With regard to the approaching visit of the Queen to Mentone, it is now generally believed that there are good, full, and sufficient grounds for the report. It is said, also, that the Prince of Wales intends paying Nice a visit towards the end of February.

The marriage of the Marquis of Carmarthen, eldest son of the Duke of Leeds, and the Lady Katherine Frances Lambton, second daughter of the late Earl of Durham and sister of the present peer, which took place on the 13th February at St. Paul's Church, Wilton-place, Knightsbridge, was a very grand affair.

The bride's dress was composed of the richest white satin, embroidered on either side of the very long train with pearls; at the bottom of the petticoat was a fringe of orange blossoms, and the bodice was trimmed with lace and orange flowers. She wore a few sprays of orange blossoms in her hair and a tall veil, which was attached by diamond stars (the Earl of Durham's gift), her other jewels including a diamond clasp, with the word "Katie," the gift of the bridegroom. She carried a large bouquet, entirely composed of snowdrops.

The bridesmaids were dressed alike in costumes of *crème sole épinglé* and plush, trimmed with cream marabout, and large tied rashes of satin merveilleux, white felt hats, and ostrich feathers. The bridegroom's present, and carried a bouquet of snowdrops.

The majority of the Hon. Charles J. R. H. S. Forbes Trefusis, eldest son of Lord Clinton, was recently celebrated with great rejoicings at Fettercairn, Kincardineshire, N.B. A grand banquet was given to all the tenants and neighbours, at which Lord Clinton and his sons, supported by the Earl of Kintore, Sir Thomas Gladstone (of Fasque), Lord-Lieutenant of the county, and others, were present. The health of the young laird was drunk with enthusiasm.

During the day Highland games and sports were held in the policies of Fettercairn House, and in the evening the village was illuminated with electric light, especially the Royal Arch, erected after the visit of the Queen and the late Prince Consort and family, who spent a night at the inn on their way to Balmoral. Flags floated in all directions, and bonfires were kindled, not only at Fettercairn, but on the Trefusis estates in Perthshire, Aberdeenshire, and Kincardineshire. A ball took place on one evening, at which Lord and Lady Clinton entertained all their neighbours.

THE COUNTESS OF LATHOM has had to undergo a painful operation, in consequence of an accident to the knee, which has confined her to her bed for the last month. Although Lady Lathom is progressing favourably, she will not be able to move for some time.

The concert which recently took place at Strathfieldsaye was, as the entertainments usually are at that mansion, a great success. The Duchess of Wellington, who is a fine player upon the harp, gave several solos on that instrument. Mrs. Wollesley and Mrs. Arnold contributed some vocal music, which was sung with considerable ability and expression.

STATISTICS.

TURNPIKE TRUSTS.—An abstract of the general statements of the income and expenditure of the several turnpike trusts in England and Wales for the year ending March, 1882, has just been issued by the Local Government Board in the form of a Blue-book. The total trusts' income from all sources amounted to £160,180 10s. 5d., of which £135,193 11s. 5d. was derived from tolls. The total expenditure amounted to £174,226 6s. 3d., of which sum £36,256 6s. 2d. was expended in paying off debt, and £58,169 6s. 7d. in manual labour. The total debt amounted to £370,335 7s. 10d., of which £342,458 was secured on mortgage, while the total assets amount to £48,570 13s. 8d. The total number of trusts is 135.

COURTS-MARTIAL IN FRANCE.—The French Minister of War has published a report upon the courts-martial held in France last year, and he states that out of 550,132 men coming within that jurisdiction, 4,934, or one in 107, were put upon their trial, and that of this number 4,192 were found guilty, and the rest acquitted. There were 41 condemned to death, 86 to penal servitude, 206 to detention in a fortress, 3,717 to various terms of imprisonment, and 49 to a fine. Of the 41 men sentenced to death 32 had the sentence commuted, and one committed suicide in goal. Nearly half of the 4,934 cases tried were for insubordination or desertion, and 11 soldiers were handed over to the French military authorities by foreign Powers, under the Extradition Acts, for crimes [at common law]. Divided into grades, there were 8 officers punished out of 25,814, 113 non-commissioned officers out of 40,024, 194 corporals and brigadiers out of 44,647, and 3,255 privates out of 419,649.

GEMS.

A THOROUGH scholar carries a key with which to unlock every door in the mansion of knowledge.

THERE is nothing that goes a spirited woman to madness as the realization that any man controls her husband.

THE man who enslaves himself to his money is proclaimed in our very language to be a miser, or a miserable man.

DISCRETION is more necessary to women than eloquence, because they have less trouble to speak well than to speak little.

PERSISTENCE is not deserving of blame or of praise, in most instances, since it is merely the continuance of tastes and feeling which we cannot create nor destroy.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

SPINACH STEWED WITH CREAM.—Wash the spinach well in several waters, then boil or steam it in a saucepan without water. Then strain it from the liquor, but do not render it hard and dry by squeezing. Chop it, and beat it well with a spoon, taking care to have picked out all the fibres. Put it into a stewpan, with a piece of butter, pepper, and salt. Stir it well as it stews, adding by degrees as much cream as will make it the proper thickness. Garnish with fried toast.

BEEF HASHED, A LA FRANÇAISE.—Put a piece of butter the size of a walnut, and a tablespoonful of flour, into a stewpan; simmer them over the fire for a minute, and stir into them a finely-chopped onion and a dessert-spoonful of minced parsley; when thoroughly browned, add a seasoning of pepper, salt and nutmeg, and put to it half a pint of water. Place in the beef, cut into small but thick slices; let it stand by the fire and heat gradually; and when near boiling-point, thicken the sauce with the yolk of three eggs, mixed with a tablespoonful of lemon-juice.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE importance of admitting the light of the sun freely to all parts of our dwellings cannot be too highly estimated. Indeed, perfect health is nearly as much dependent on pure sunlight as it is on pure air.

LADIES of fashion have bestowed their affection for the moment on the anemone. It is worn by all who wish to be and are of the first flight; naturally men plant it in their button-holes.

THE London Municipal Government Bill will, it is said, contain a special provision for absorbing the outskirts of the metropolis from time to time as they advance in population and importance, and it is the intention of the Government to extend the scheme to all the burghs in the kingdom.

THE last idea is a Leap Year ball. The ladies, for the nonce, select their partners, take them to supper, and generally evince that tender solicitude for the well-being of those they honour with their hands as the men do under ordinary circumstances. The amount of fun which beauty will extract out of hapless humanity under this altered condition of things is clearly large—according, that is to say, to the capacity of the fun makers, who ought to be witty and wise.

HOW TO SAVE YOURSELF FROM DROWNING.—An experienced swimmer says in regard to drowning: When you find yourself in deep water, you will sink first a few feet down, but if you do not struggle you will come quickly to the surface again, which on reaching immediately draw a full breath, throw your head back and this will have the effect of placing you in a recumbent position on the surface of the water. Now, this is a most critical time for those who don't know what to do next. Extend your arms at once on a level with your shoulders, palms of hands downwards, so that the water cannot penetrate them, and begin gently paddling the water with the movement of the hands from the wrist only. Extend your legs quietly and slowly in a line with your body. If you raise your arms or your legs above the surface of the water you will sink, but if you have the presence of mind not to do so, or struggle about, you will never sink, so long as you keep paddling gently, without exertion, with your hands, and so you may float on until you are picked up, or until you are numbed by the cold.

WHAT IS LOVE?

In answer to the question: "What is love?" sixteen different persons testify as follows:—

The most interesting and pardonable of human weaknesses.

A mere delusion that has ruined many men.

An egotism of two.

A feeling of such exquisite tenderness that it is too sweet for comparison.

I don't know anything about it; don't think it amounts to much.

The sweetest and most passionate excitement known to man—binding together, by the strongest cords, sex, kindred and nations.

Don't know anything about it; I never was there.

It is something that no fellow can find out—yet all feel its power, more or less.

A sweet and delusive imagination only.

A dormant passion of the mind aroused by beauty or intellectual qualities of some one woman.

An undefinable principle which all people possess, and which lies at the very foundation of happiness.

A noble passion that envelopes our whole being, and shows itself in every thought, word and action.

True bliss—void of fancy—of happiest happiness.

A feeling that takes root in the heart, and is only made perfect when it enters the soul.

A latent faculty in the mind that, when aroused, glows with a radiance that illuminates the gloomiest mind and yields a power of influence that is unequalled.

One of the worst diseases of the heart.

